THE CONDESA (LADY NAN)

FINDS ONE OF HER AFGHAN ATTENDANTS HOLDING A KNIFE AGAINST THE SIDE OF A HOTEL CHAMBERMAID WHO PROVES TO BE A SECRET AGENT OF WILHELMSTRASSE

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# THE UNSEEN HAND

Stories of Diplomatic Adventure

BY
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W. R. CALDWELL & CO.
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## CHAPTER I

### THE MYSTERY OF THE FREE LANCES

YOUNG Simmons had appeared in Fleet Street as a fledgling war-correspondent for the *Ladies' Farm & Home Weekly* of Columbus, Ohio, having been dizzily elevated from the society column by a managing editor who had no other available material. And he was endeavoring to impress a Young-American point of view upon the men who were shuttling between St. Bride's House and Adelphi Terrace while they waited for transportation and faked their daily cables from anything they could pick up around Whitehall.

Someone had put him up at the Press Club as a matter of *esprit de corps*. Somebody else invited him to dine at the Savage, where he met such men as Palmer, "R. H. D." Irwin, and other of the Olympians who happened to be passing through at the time. Simmons had read "Gallegher," thought it a rather improbable sketch, and ventured to correct, upon some trifling point, the big kindly man who, in a few short months, was to become only a memory. He expressed his convictions upon the bogey of European diplomacy—pointed out that nothing good was ever accomplished in world politics by such means, and that

all international relations would be the better for the wholesome glare of publicity. Which automatically shunted the conversation toward Barremore, sitting at a near-by table.

If Barremore, of the Associated Press, had one hobby which absorbed him more than his other ones, it was the running down of a supposedly impenetrable mystery. His uncanny instinct for that sort of thing was so well known to all the syndicate representatives—Associated, United, Central, and Reuter—that he was invariably consulted when any of them ran up against a story which seemed to have neither beginning nor end. His reputation for knowing what *not* to print was so much a tradition that he probably received more confidential information from the military authorities than any other magazine or newspaper man in Europe—was admitted to more conferences from which the Press was supposed to be rigidly excluded. As might have been expected, the boy's opinions drew comment from him—quite to the point.

"I infer that you've not been over this side very long, or you'd scarcely consider European diplomacy a joke. You know something of the German propaganda in the United States, of course? And a little reflection will tell you that even more strenuous efforts are being constantly made by *Wilhelmstrasse* to cause dissension among the Allies—to win over neutrals to Germany's side. Bearing that in mind, will you explain to me how it is that Germany's almost superhuman efforts have been, so far, unsuccessful?—that she has failed, with two minor exceptions, in every political coup she has attempted since the war started, not to mention the many before that?"

There was material for consideration in Barremore's questions. In fact, none of them had happened to get just that slant on the situation before. But Simmons, apparently, had not yet acquired the mental development which promptly recognizes incontrovertible fact.

"Oh, I think weight of public opinion accounts for that sort of thing! Surely you don't take any stock in that Diplomatic Free Lance rubbish? I've never seen the claim made that he was anything but a fictitious character."

"Nor I, sir. But some of us here are positive that a number of individual coups attributed to him actually have taken place within the last three years. I'll go even further: I'll bet a hundred dollars that practically every bit of diplomatic strategy which has been credited to this same mysterious "Free Lance" will prove authentic if the secret history of this war is ever written! Because—if they were entirely imaginary, Germany would be a darned sight nearer victory than she is to-day. It's only circumstantial evidence, of course, but every newspaper man who has been on this job for a year or more will admit the belief that some *unseen hand* has intervened—not once, but fifty times since 1914—to save England from disaster, and, in so doing, unquestionably preserved the structure of modern civilization that we have so laboriously built up. Whose hand it was, we may never know; most of its work could not have been accomplished if his identity *were* known—or that of others who have presumably assisted him. But to express disbelief in the momentous part which diplomatic intrigue is constantly playing in this war is to ignore one of the most self-evident facts concerning it."

Judging by the silent assent to these statements, the Associated man's opinions were so evidently authoritative that Simmons had the good taste to subside a little. Presently Barremore, and Grant, of the United Press, sauntered out of the club, across to the Cecil—undecided as to how they were to spend the evening, but with the hope of running across some of the leading Government men. For the Cecil is somewhat of a rendezvous these days, with a noticeable substitution of khaki for evening clothes and a more democratic mixture of officers than under the old *régime*. As they looked about for comfortable seats, a handsome and rather distinguished-appearing man in the sixties looked up from his paper with an expression of pleased surprise. One would have had little difficulty in guessing him to be an American from a Southern state—an ex-Confederate, by his gray felt hat, white moustache, and imperial. As he rose from his chair and advanced toward them, Barremore turned around.

"Well—I'll—be—darned! Look who's here, Grant! Colonel Dinwiddie, you're about the last man I expected to see in London just now, but I'm dev'lish glad you're here! How did it happen? State Department detail, I suppose? You must remember Grant? Used to be in Washington for the *Tribune*, several years ago."

"Majo' Barremo', suh, this is a great pleasuh! Mistuh Grant, I remembeh yo' perfectly, suh! Yo' were a connection of the General's—and yo' good motheh was Sally Clay, of Culpeppeh County, Vuhginny. Of cou'se I remembeh yo'! Gentlemen, this London place I find is scan'lously dry, but I have—uh—ascertained the methods by which anyone in need of refreshment may obtain

something in the natuh of a julep. Not a properly constructed one, of cou'se—but sufficiently resembling the real thing to ansuh the purpose temporarily. Shall we—eh? Will yo' do me the hono'?"

Having experienced considerable difficulty in getting anything so like a breath from home, during their sojourn in England, they accepted the Colonel's hospitality—afterward returning to the smoking lounge near the great dining room, where they seated themselves, to watch the occasional celebrities as they came out, and chat over old times in Washington.

"You're still connected with the State Department, Colonel?"

"Yes, suh. In one capacity or anotheh, I've served through seven administrations. I suppose my position amounts to something like a Fou'th Assistant Secretary of State—the person who has served in the Depa'tment until he knows the wo'ding of every treaty—the political status of every man connected with otheh Gov'ments. It was that so't of knowledge which made it advisable that I should be where Ambassado' Page might consult me frequently, fo' a month or so. It was an oppo'tunity fo' seeing London and France which I was really much pleased to accept."

As they were chatting over affairs in the States, a smooth-shaven man of striking appearance came out of the big dining room with a woman whose beauty and taste in dress attracted general attention. They were in conventional dinner-clothes, but it was evident that the man was more accustomed to uniform and that they were both well-known personages. As Colonel Dinwiddie caught

sight of them, he abruptly stopped talking, took a second look, and rose from his chair. He was approaching the man with outstretched hand before the war correspondents could stop him and whisper that he might be making a mistake.

"Mistuh Grisscome, suh, this is one of the most delightful suhprises of my life! It must be fifteen yeahs since I last had the pleasure of talking with yo' at the State Department in Washington! I really feahed yo' might be no longer living, suh!"

Now the personage was a man of rare tact and democratic ideas—qualities which had been partly responsible for his wide popularity. He saw at a glance—as did his charming companion—that the elderly gentleman was quite honest in his supposed recognition of an old friend. So he grasped the outstretched hand with courteous warmth, to gain time while he decided how to explain the mistake without making it too embarrassing for the genial Southerner. Barremore, however, had got his wits together by this time, and came to the rescue.

"Your Lordship, may I present my old friend, Colonel Jefferson Dinwiddie, of Virginia and Washington—at present attached to our Embassy in London! Colonel, this is His Lordship, Rear Admiral, the Earl of S——. You supposed him an American whom you'd known very well; of course—case of misleading resemblance."

A flush of mortification crept into the handsome old Virginian's face, but—as he took another look at the Earl—it was succeeded by an expression of mystification. The resemblance was so unbelievably perfect—allowing, of course, for the slight changes of fifteen years. He was

beginning to apologize for his mistake when the Earl courteously stopped him.

"If you're connected with the American Embassy, Colonel, we should know each other, anyhow, and I'm really obliged to Mr. Barremore for the introduction. Being taken for someone else is not an unusual experience, I assure you! Sometimes, I fancy I must have grown from a standardized pattern. And it's quite possible that we *have* met, don't you know. I'm frequ'ntly in the States—know a lot of your Governm'nt people. Er—my dear" [turning to the Countess, who had been a smiling and interested spectator], "let me present Colonel Dinwiddie. Mr. Barremore you already know. We must have quite a number of mutual acquaintances, Colonel. Er—why not compare notes some evening? Let's see? I believe we're dining at home, Thursday evening—in Park Lane. Could you gentlemen come to us then? No other engagem'nt, I hope? Very good! We'll expect you, then, at seven-thirty."

As they returned to where Grant was sitting, the Colonel was dazed. Barremore was trying to puzzle out something which eluded him.

"Must have been a pretty striking resemblance, Colonel?"

"My boy—I'm feeling a little anxiety about myself—really! Must be feeling my age more than I supposed. I don't think I eveh made a mistake like that befo' in my life! Why, I would *sweah* to yo', even now, that His Lo'dship is Mistuh Cyrus K. Grisscome—a very wealthy Bostonian who did some valuable secret service wo'k fo' ou' Gov'ment during the Roosevelt administration.

He was carried on the Navy Register three or fo' yeahs as Commander Crespinge, and his yacht was used as a fast scout cruiser. But—of cou'se—that's impossible! It's merely one of those stahtling resemblances yo' read about in wo'ks of fiction. I can sca'cely express to yo' my appreciation of his cou'tesy in smoothing oveh my blundeh. The invitation, of cou'se, was merely a part of it—which we must decline with a note of thanks, to-morrow. It was very tactfully done!"

"It certainly was, Colonel! His Lordship and Countess Mona are among the most popular couples in Europe to-day. And you'll not make the mistake of declining their invitation, either! Under the circumstances, it was a most unusual and courteous thing to do—wouldn't happen once in a million times, over here. But he meant it. We shall be expected in Park Lane on Thursday evening—and I can assure you that many of our American society climbers would pay a round five thousand in cash to substitute for us. I'm wondering—just wondering—whether he had any object behind natural kindness in that invitation?"

Next day, when Grant and Barremore stepped into the Press Club in Salisbury Square, one of the Reuter men, who had been glancing through a copy of the *Kölnische Morgenblatt*, commenced to chuckle over an article until some of the other men asked what was amusing him so much.

"The German mind! The ponderous workings of the German mind! Listen to this, will you!" (Translating, as he read):

If evidence were needed to show what utter fools the English are—how far they still wander from a realization of our purpose

and determination—one should merely note their continued failure to take us seriously after the two last bloody years. In spite of the fact that we are regularly obtaining details of their army and naval plans far in advance of their own Parliament, they stupidly assume that all danger from our perfect spy system has been reduced to a negligible minimum. Their newspapers discuss dangerous questions, and their magazines enlarge upon them, quite as if it were impossible for us to obtain copies of them. One of the Cassell monthlies, for example, devotes quite a lengthy article to an identification of the infamous "Diplomatic Free Lance" and his associates. This man, it will be remembered—by the most contemptible betrayal of confidence reposed in him by former German hosts, who had entertained him and the woman masquerading as his wife, upon the supposition that they were people of breeding who belonged to the aristocracy—has been the solitary exception among Englishmen to prove really dangerous to us, and a rope is waiting for him as soon as he is caught. Various conjectures have been made by *Wilhelmstrasse* as to his identity—but the truth is now kindly volunteered for us by the fools across the Channel. It seems that he is—as we have been morally certain for some time—a sport-crazed English peer who has never been credited with the slightest political ability—Lord Trevor, of Dartmoor. In his nefarious and unprincipled schemes against us, he has been assisted by the woman known as Lady Nan Trevor; by a Sir Francis Lammerford, who was once dismissed from the English Foreign Office for conduct unbecoming a gentleman and diplomat; by a blackamoor servant, calling himself an Afghan prince; by a Sir Edward Wray, whose thinly veiled name is easily recognizable by every German who recalls the black treachery of August, 1914; by an unprincipled attaché of the American Embassy in Paris; and by the old reprobate, Cavaliere Scarpia, in Italy. Editorially, we take this opportunity to thank Messrs. Cassell & Co.

for receipt of their magazine—with the information contained—and express our conviction that this choice association of criminals will mysteriously die on their own ground, in one way or another, within a few weeks.

As the Reuter man finished the paragraph, there was a roar of laughter around the room.

"The bloomin' blighters! The confidin' systematic babes in the wood! They read a bloomin' magazine story clear through from start to finish—written by a man who's not even English, I'm told—an' then are so demnition thick they don't even know it's pure fiction! My word! What a beastly lot of rotters! Fancy their never even turnin' up Burke or Debrett an' findin' there are no such people as Viscount Trevor of Dartmoor or Sir Francis Lammerford in the British Peerage!"

"Aye! But—stop a bit! There are quite enough Trevors and Wrays to give the massive German mind an impression that it is on the right track. One Englishman is like another of the same name to 'em, you know; an' it'd be just like 'em to attempt exterminatin' a whole family until they were jolly well sure they'd struck the right one, don't you know!"

"Oh, thunder! If an editor doesn't know a purely imaginary story when he reads it, he'd better get a job shovelling coal!"

"How did this Diplomatic Free Lance business start—anyhow?"

"Blessed if *I* know! Several years ago—when all Europe was holding its breath over the audacity of a brilliant coup by England—I asked an Under Secretary in

*Downing Street* if one of their men was responsible for it. He said, most emphatically, *no!* Said that Government could never have authorized the methods used nor recognized, publicly, the man who scored for it. He believed it could have been done by nobody save a man 'working on his own'—as a free lance. Well, other coups have followed that one in rapid succession—particularly since the war started—until anything for which there's no accounting is set down as the work of England's mysterious Free Lance. Whether that magazine chap originated the idea as pure fiction, or whether he's somebody really in the know and taking that method of recording actual underground history, may never be definitely published. But I'll say this much: I know of at least eighteen separate instances where coups described as the work of this mysterious English Free Lance have actually been verified two or three months later. It's legend—a joke, if you like—Baron Munchausen and Sherlock Holmes combined, gossip, hearsay, pure fiction, as far as anything that Germany really knows. And yet—I've got a hundred quid in my pocket that says it's all of ninety per cent. fact! And I'm talking as an Associated Press man who has been writing European politics for all of twenty years—who has stayed with this war since the day the Germans entered Luxembourg."

Although the topic was merely one of casual discussion when newspaper men had exhausted pretty well everything else, Barremore was becoming obsessed by it. Suppose the anecdotes, the magazine stories, the German comment, were actually the outcroppings of a far-reaching influence in the war which, for obvious reasons, could not

be made public until the lapse of time nullified the danger of such a revelation? Suppose the magazine man responsible for the fiction was really on the inside—using this method of preserving for future generations a record of the actual secret-service work that was silently doing more than armies or submarines toward swinging the balance of final decision against the Teutonic empires? According to the law of averages, it was probable that some, if not all, of those associated with the Free Lance would lose their lives before the end of the war as a natural result of their activities. The pitchers cannot forever go to the well immune. Suppose—the Free Lances being killed, and their chronicler also passing away without revealing their identity—all record of this vital force in the war should be lost to future readers of history.

Barremore, of course, recognized that, even were he in possession of the real facts, he could not publish them—certainly not until after the death of those concerned; which meant that any time he spent in probing the mystery would represent just that much unproductive labor for several years at least. But his pride as a journalist—his sense of loyal obligation eventually to place credit where credit was due—made him the more determined to ferret out the truth. During the next two days—while waiting for cable news to break—he spent several hours in the British Museum looking up the "S——" peerage, the records of several county families, and everything he could find on India during the late 90's. Then he called upon three retired East Indians—giving the impression that he was collecting data for a book on Indian society during the period when they were in office—and obtained a mass

of apparently trivial information from which, upon comparing it with what he already had, he drew some rather amazing deductions.

He was doing for the Associated Press a series of interviews with men and women then prominent in London. One of these—the Condesa de la Montaneta—was occupying, with her Moorish servants, a suite at the Carlton. She was a wealthy Spanish widow who had come to England with letters of introduction which promptly opened the doors of London's most exclusive aristocracy to her, and had become, within a few weeks, exceedingly popular. It was understood that she had rented a *pied-à-terre* with several unusual features, somewhere in Belgravia, and was staying at the Carlton until it should be ready for her. A description of this little house, with personal data concerning its mistress, being the sort of thing Barremore was obtaining for his syndicate, he secured an interview one afternoon when she had returned from a week-end in Surrey.

Within five minutes, he found himself yielding to the fascination of her undeniable beauty and Castilian accent. She was seated at a davenport between two windows when he was admitted to her suite, and excused herself long enough to address some envelopes before turning around to chat with him. Her profile, in the somewhat darkened room, was squarely against the window at her left; somehow, it seemed oddly familiar. In the course of his journalistic experience, he had learned to distinguish between the essentials in a person's appearance or manner and the little accessories which, so frequently, made up an almost impenetrable disguise. Of these essentials, the most

important is the profile, which *may be* somewhat altered, but very seldom *is*. And the Condesa's impressed itself upon his mental retina with the clear-cut familiarity of the head on a new silver dime. In no other detail did she resemble any one he knew, save as a general brunette type. At the end of half an hour—when he was rising from his chair to go—it came upon him with stunning force that her profile was identical with that of Mona, Countess of S——.

Now Countess Mona, while by no means a blonde, was enough lighter in the tones of her complexion and hair to make it seem almost impossible that dyes alone could be responsible for the difference, and stood about five feet four—as nearly as Barremore could remember. As she gave him her hand in parting, Madame la Condesa was all of five feet seven—her eyes were but an inch or two lower than his own. A different arrangement of the hair made the Condesa's face appear much fuller. She was a heavier woman by two or three stone than the Countess Mona, if appearances could be trusted. The expression, the play of features, was different—as was the taste in clothes. Yet—the profiles were identical; and that of Madame la Condesa was not in keeping with her face at other angles. It was the clean-cut outline of a more slender woman's face.

From the Carlton, Barremore strolled westward to Park Lane. Walking along by the Park railing, he studied the appearance of the houses opposite and tried to recall something connected with one of the blocks when he had first visited London, as a young fellow, several years before. Presently, he remembered that an older

building had been torn down to make way for the foundations of a new house, then in process of erection. He had walked through the lot to its rear on Park Street, curious as to the object of certain excavations, forty feet below the ground-level. At the time, he had supposed a public building of some sort was being erected upon the site, and soon forgot the peculiar excavations. But he now recalled their exact appearance, and, though he couldn't definitely locate the lot, saw that it must be either the one covered by a detached Jacobean residence, or that containing a block of four city houses adjoining it. That the excavations he remembered could have been intended for the foundations of the four houses, was out of the question—they didn't correspond in relative position or outline. Which apparently settled the question as to their having been used for the Jacobean mansion or vaults under its surrounding grounds. The mansion was the well-known town residence of the Earl and Countess of S——.

Next evening, when he and Colonel Dinwiddie reached the house, they were introduced to four other guests in the drawing room. As the party sat down to dinner, Barremore encouraged the lady at his right to describe her experiences as a Red Cross nurse while he covertly studied his fellow guests and tried to recall what he'd heard concerning them. The gentleman opposite—a tall spare man whose strongly marked face expressed power and mentality—was a Baron W——, who had been for many years in the Diplomatic service but was now supposed to be serving for the duration of the war in some other capacity. From stray remarks overheard elsewhere, also

from their manner of addressing him, the war correspondent inferred that he had been an intimate friend of the Earl and Countess Mona for many years.

Another man with an air of distinction, near the end of the table, might have been taken for an Englishman who had spent much of his time in the tropics—unless the observer happened to be expert in ethnographic distinctions. His clipped moustache had the typical English cut; his manner of expressing himself was essentially English. But to a close observer who knew something of racial peculiarities, he was unmistakably Oriental—presumably Hindu or Afghan. Barremore remembered him as Sir Muhammad Jubbur Khan Bahadur, G.C.S.I., brother of the Maharajah of J——. Educated at Oxford and maintaining, for many years, a beautifully furnished London residence on Grosvenor Square, he was a well-known figure among the clubmen, a wealthy man of considerable influence in Indian affairs, but so thoroughly British in manner and appearance that his name came as a surprise in any introduction. It occurred to the journalist subconsciously that from the rear entrance of the Earl's grounds on Park Street to Sir Muhammad's house, was but a few steps—two or three blocks at the outside.

As they adjourned for coffee and cigars to a big library at the right of the main hall, Barremore was struck with a haunting sense of familiarity. Hours later it occurred to him that the room had been almost photographically described in stories of the Diplomatic Free Lance, but his mind was occupied at the time with an estimate as to the thickness of the outer wall behind the bookcases which lined the south side of the library. The window embras-

ures gave an impression of ordinary thickness for the walls of such a house. He remembered, however, that, viewed from the outside, there had seemed to be a six-foot extension to that wing, unaccounted for in the regular shape of the room—which brought back a recollection of the original excavations again.

Colonel Dinwiddie proved a decided success as a dinner guest. The finished representative of gentlemen planters for several generations in Virginia, he was a desirable acquisition to any social gathering, while thirty years' experience in the State Department of the United States had given him a knowledge of the world's political history which any university would have been glad to secure for its faculty. As Barremore noted the attention given the Colonel by His Lordship and two of his guests, it seemed to him that for some occult reason the Virginian was really the guest of honor that evening. When they were in the big library, Baron W—— called his attention to some of the family portraits on the walls.

"As a descendant of the old county families, Colonel, you doubtless have some of these portraits by Reynolds, Lawrence, and Romney on your own walls. What I wished to point out, however, was the curious repetition of family traits through succeeding generations. Notice, for example, the striking resemblance between Lord Francis S——, painted by Sir Peter Lely, and his grandson, Colonel Viscount S——, painted by Reynolds so many years later. (Er—would Your Lordship mind standing just under the Viscount's portrait for a moment? Thanks!) You see, Colonel? His Lordship might have sat for either of those paintings—done long before he was

born. Odd, how a strain will perpetuate itself like that through all the intermarriages—isn't it!"

Again, something vaguely aroused speculation in Barremore's thoughts as to whether this little by-play upon the part of His Lordship's most intimate friend could have been premeditated—could have been deliberately thought out—for a purpose? To anyone who had mistaken the Earl for someone else, it was about as conclusive proof concerning his identity and that of his ancestors as could be offered. There were the portraits—so genuinely Romneys and Lawrences that there was no doubting the period in which they had been painted. There was the living descendant of the originals. There was no getting away from the close resemblance. Yet the more Barremore thought it over, the more convinced he became that a theory which had been persistently growing in his mind was absolutely correct.

Walking through Green Park toward the American Embassy, shortly after midnight—when the settling down of a black fog made it temporarily impossible to get any bearings—he and the Colonel stumbled upon a bench, and sat down to smoke a cigar in the hope that the mist would presently lift. Muffled sounds came to them from beyond the Park limits, but after listening intently they decided that nobody else had ventured through that part of the Park in the murk.

After a momentary silence, it occurred to the war-correspondent that no safer place could be found in London for a discussion of the Free Lance mystery with the Colonel—and the necessity for such a discussion appeared unquestionable, if the Virginian was to understand the

danger of any reference to his supposed recognition of an old friend in His Lordship of S——, as Barremore saw it.

"Colonel, I believe we've stumbled upon something that Germany would give each of us a million to know!—something which any unscrupulous newspaper man would publish, regardless of consequences. Do you remember all of those names which the *Kölnische Morgenblatt* quoted from that story in the Cassell magazine?"

"Yes, suh—I may say that I certainly do! Yo' must remembeh that I have read articles concerning this mysterious Free Lance befo'—so am quite familiah with the names of his supposed associates. Even as fiction, you know, that so't of thing would natu'ly be of interest to one in my official position."

"Exactly! And you can understand *my* interest in it. Colonel, I've been digging a little since you met the Earl in the Cecil, the other evening, and I've turned up some rather amazing isolated facts which fit together like pieces of a Chinese puzzle. But, in discussing them, we must avoid mentioning real names. Suppose we assume his family name to be 'Trevor,' instead of what it is? Suppose we call his most intimate friend 'Sir Francis Lammerford,' instead of 'Baron W——,' and his wife, 'Lady Nan Trevor,' instead of 'Countess M——?' Suppose we mention another most intimate friend as Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan, instead of 'Sir M—— J—— Khan Bahadur'? And understand that 'Sir Edward Wray' is a thinly veiled reference to their friend in *Downing Street?* Get me? Understand what I'm driving at?"

"I follow yo', suh—pehfectly!"

"Good! And you'll know exactly who I'm really talking about when I mention any of those names?"

"Pehfectly, suh. I see yo' reason fo' the precaution—even out heah in this fog."

"All right. I'm going to give you a little biographical sketch as I see it; and I'll say, frankly, that I've had proof enough to satisfy *me*.

"We'll go back to the time when Cyrus K. Grisscome—the only surviving member of a well-known Boston family—began piling up money in Western mines and railway development before he was thirty-five. He proved a splendid organizer and executive, but his greatest ability was shown in his knowledge of men and human motives. As a boy in high school, geography and history were fads with him. When he could afford it, he fitted up a large, fast yacht with scientific apparatus for marine study. Roosevelt had a good many common interests with him; they cruised together for a couple of months. When he became President and began to give us a real Diplomatic Service for the first time in American history, Grisscome made occasional suggestions which proved exceedingly valuable—so much so, that he was finally induced to undertake secret and delicate work that couldn't be recognized by any Government, if successful, or the secret agent saved if he happened to be caught at it. Grisscome was successful—almost unbelievably so—for several years. Then the Taft administration came in. Grisscome's services and character were neither understood nor appreciated. He could get no backing without red-tape explanations that would have been simply impossible in the circumstances. Our Diplomatic Service became about

what it had been before the Roosevelt administration—which expresses the condition, adequately. Grisscome was thoroughly disgusted. He had money to burn—arranged for an indefinite absence, put his mining affairs in the hands of his Western partner, and left on his yacht for a protracted stay in the Orient. Get me—so far?"

"Yes, suh; yo' are entirely correct in rega'd to Mistuh Grisscome's connection with ou' Gov'ment. I can vouch fo' that."

"Well, in the Hong Kong Club, he met John Satterlee, the ship speculator, and his friend Culpeper Zandtt, the war-correspondent. They put through a couple of big deals together. Then Grisscome drifted up through the Khyber Pass into Afghanistan. Happened to save the life of a young khan who had been educated at Oxford and whose family was even older than the Ameer's. Abdool Mohammed attached himself to Grisscome as a friend and exploring companion, feeling instinctively that the American was a born leader and a great personage in his own country. They drifted down into the Madras Presidency—were hunting in the back country of Mysore when they ran across a mighty sick English baronet in an abandoned dâk bungalow, his servant having run away from what he supposed to be cholera but which proved to be enteric. It wasn't long before Abdool was struck with the marvelous resemblance between Grisscome and the Englishman, who had been a Deputy Commissioner in Madras, his family estate in Devonshire having been gambled away in the time of George the Fourth. Sir George Trevor grew steadily weaker and died ten days later, but, while they stayed there taking care of him, he told Griss-

come a great deal about his life, his family connections and friends—went into it so minutely, as dying men often do, that Grisscome, who had one of those marvelous photographic memories, got a pretty complete mental picture of the baronet's history and personality."

"Go on, suh! I find yo' narrative vastly interesting.'

"Sir George left a few papers with data containing the names of his family solicitors, addresses and photographs of London friends, and a few simple matters to be wound up. When Grisscome reached Madras, three different persons stopped him on the streets, addressing him as Sir George Trevor, and congratulating him upon his improved health. For a joke, he started in to wind up the baronet's connection with Indian life—merely from curiosity as to whether it was possible to carry out such a deception. Hinted at finding a considerable amount of buried loot in an old rock-temple, up country, which had been abandoned for centuries—but didn't make it definite enough to give the Government any valid claim upon what he'd found. Then he and Abdool went to England—from Aden—on his big yacht. He'd had her partly rebuilt and registered under another name—the *Ranee Sylvia*—as having been recently purchased by him. Called upon the Trevor solicitors in London, was promptly recognized as 'Sir George,' and commissioned them to buy back the Devonshire estates. When this had been done, he ran down for a week to look them over and found that the family who had occupied the place for ninety years had neither made any alterations in the old manor-house, which had been erected around a Twelfth Century Norman tower, nor even removed the old Trevor portraits

from the Elizabethan 'long gallery.' Some of his neighbors met him riding on the county roads and addressed him as 'Sir George.' The thing got to be something more than a joke; he decided to play the game and see how long he could get away with it, having secret service work in mind."

"But, my deah suh, he couldn't possibly remembeh every one the baronet had known—by sight!"

"I'm coming to that. Grisscome, as you may remember, was a man whom it was exceedingly difficult to catch napping—at any time. His mind worked like an electric spark—and he had intuition. It was known to every one in Madras that Sir George had been in poor health for a year or more—his memory and ability to carry out his duties as Commissioner becoming so much affected that the doctors ordered him up country to recuperate. When Grisscome happened to see a man's or a woman's face lighting up with an expression of recognition, he met them half way—spoke of the partial amnesia which his illness had left and begged them to recall themselves to him, which they naturally did with considerable detail.

"He drifted about the London clubs for a few months—then got restless. Went to *Downing Street*, introduced himself to Sir Edward Wray as the unknown person who had sent in some exceedingly important information from Afghanistan, and suggested attempting a most audacious political bluff at the then-approaching Kiel manœuvres of the German Navy. Wray saw the point—admitted its potential value to England—but said Government couldn't authorize such an attempt or in any way protect the man who made it. Grisscome, however, went ahead and pulled it off successfully. From that moment

he has been the most brilliant secret-service diplomat in Europe, scoring coup after coup for England—invariably without authorization or protection. His services eventually reached a point where the Crown simply had to confer a peerage upon him. He refused, at first, telling Wray who he really was, and the circumstances which led to his impersonating Sir George Trevor so amazingly. Then Wray sprung a solar plexus one on *him* by explaining that Garter King-at-Arms had traced out the Trevor connections until they proved Grisscome, of Boston, a second cousin of Sir George, and his only-surviving heir to the title!"

"Upon my hono', suh! That is the most amazing circumstance, if true, which has eveh come within my experience! Go on, suh!"

"Shortly before they made him Viscount Trevor of Dartmoor, a girl of sixteen turned up from Madras—an only child of Captain Guy Tremaine, who had been the most capable officer of the Indian Secret Service and was killed in Cabul by Russian agents. She had been a companion of her father in his confidential work and had a marvelous education of a most unusual sort. Tremaine and Trevor had been very chummy. The Captain's will named Trevor as Nan's guardian if he would accept the charge. Although, of course, he had never seen the girl before, she thought she recognized *him* at once; they were mutually pleased with each other. As time passed, she proved to have so much knowledge of Oriental intrigue and was such a phenomenal linguist that they simply couldn't keep her out of the game—in which her capacity proved almost equal to that of her guardian. As she grew

into womanhood, they quite naturally fell in love with each other; but he was more than twenty years older, and thought marriage with her preposterous. There was no avoiding it, however; he had spoiled her for any lesser breed of man, and he was so magnificently preserved—kept himself so remarkably fit—that he passed for years younger than his age. Even to-day, he is one of the most superb horsemen, fencers, and aviators in Europe. So—they were married. Took a honeymoon on their yacht—and pulled off a most amazing coup for England during the voyage."

"And the men associated with them in their Secret Service wo'k? One infers there must be othehs—who assist them."

"I'm coming to them. Sir Francis Lammerford was Dean of the *King's Messengers* for several years, and was then supposed to have retired, after coming into money. He was frequently in India, knew Tremaine very well, though he hadn't seen Nan since she was seven or eight. Abdool had met him in Cabul two or three times, and Sir George Trevor, as Deputy Commissioner, had been also an intimate friend. He guessed the substitution before Trevor had been in London a year, and was so captivated by the idea that he got to be thicker with the new Sir George than he had ever been with the original—recognized in him a far bigger, more forceful man. Naturally, they were soon working together in underground diplomacy. Lammerford simply couldn't keep out of the game when he saw two such players as Trevor and Nan Tremaine at work. Raymond Carter, of the American Embassy in Paris, you must know very well, Colonel. He had met

Grisscome in Washington, and suspected his identity from the night he crossed the Channel with Trevor in a biplane. Scarpia, whom the *Kölnische Morgenblatt* referred to as 'the old Italian reprobate' is better known as 'the old bald eagle of Italian diplomacy.' He's past eighty-six—but so active and well preserved that he doesn't look sixty-five. Bald as a billiard-ball—hooked nose and drooping white moustache—piercing, deep-set eyes—and knowledge under that polished brown dome of his that would turn Europe inside out if he ever took the notion to blab all he knows. You hear very little of him, these days; he goes regularly, every year, to an oasis in the Sahara to recuperate. Even this war wouldn't stop him. But he gave Trevor material assistance in influencing Italy to break with the Triple Alliance when she did. Scarpia is a world-famous character; there is no masquerading in his case, and the mere mention of his name in association with Trevor's is in itself a verification of Trevor's being much more substantial than merely a name in fiction."

"And—will yo' tell me, suh, yo' reasons fo' supposing Lady Nan Trevo' and our charming hostess to be identical?"

"First place—our 'charming hostess' appears to be playing the big game at this very moment! You were introduced at the Carson reception, last evening, to that Spanish beauty, Madame la Condesa de la Montaneta. Did you happen to get a glimpse of her profile?"

"Upon my wo'd—yes, suh! I wondered at the time who she reminded me of! But—she's a much taller woman, eh?"

"Notice the heels of her shoes, when she was sitting down? 'Louis' heels—the tallest ones I ever saw—three inches, at least! Notice our hostess's feet this evening? She wore what are sold in the States as 'misses' shoes—with low rubber heels. She has beautiful feet, but prides herself upon being a long-distance walker and never wears 'Louis' because she says they take the spring out of her instep. Now—allow for differences in arrangement of the hair, costume, manner, accent, complexion. Discover some dermatological secret for swelling the flesh over the cheek-bones a little, and you'll find but one woman playing the two parts. I rang up our hostess, last evening, when the Condesa was at the Carson reception, and was told that she was spending the day in Hants. Just before we turned up for dinner, this evening, I sent up my card to the Condesa at the Carlton, and was told that *she* was in *Essex*. When one is in evidence, the other is *not*.

"There's a German plot brewing, Colonel—right here in London. And you can bet your last cent that Lady Nan Trevor is on the job! Keep your eye on His Lordship for the remainder of your stay over here; keep tab on the gentlemen we've designated as Sir Francis Lammerford and Sir Abdool (who was given a 'G.C.S.I.' at the Delhi Durbar for *his* services). Before you go home, you may pick up more hints concerning the underground diplomacy of Europe than you obtained at the State Department in all your thirty years' service! This is the real thing over here, Colonel—they fence with the buttons off the foils. A slip means something more than death for the fencer! It may prove a national catastrophe

within a few hours! Above all, keep this point fixed in your mind. Lord Trevor and his associates are myths—mere characters in fiction. If you happened to express any other belief, it might cost the lives of men and women who are winning this war for civilization. If you and I outlive them, we may some day talk—to our grandchildren—and write vital history which cannot be written to-day."

After a silence of several minutes, broken only by muffled echoes through the fog, the Colonel said, reflectively:

"After all, suh, yo' mysterious Free Lances are really as intangible as this fog, fo' all we actually know to the contrary. Yo' have wo'ked out a most ingenious and entirely possible *theory* concerning Grisscome's activities fo' the last ten or fifteen yeahs—but yo've no proof that a co't would accept. Lo'd Trevo's house, which has been described in fiction, appeahs to closely resemble that of ou' host of this evening—but such use by authors of famous mansions, in their fiction, is considered entirely permissible, and is frequently practised. My recognizing Grisscome was evidence of a so't; yet I know now that I couldn't *sweah* to him. No, suh! At dinner, this evening, I noticed little differences in manner—in accent—of which he was unconscious."

"Colonel, he has been cultivating that manner and accent ever since he took up Trevor's personality in London—as a pose—giving the impression that he's an out-of-door man who has no head for State affairs at all. As for his house—well; the first excavation made for it was a thirty-by-fifty hole, forty feet deep, under the lawn at the south side, with a narrow passage leading twenty feet north. This was roofed over with brick arches at a depth

of twenty-five feet, and the ground filled in solid above it. The next excavation was a deep trench, five feet wide, leading from a position under what afterward became that Jacobean library to the southeast corner of the grounds at the rear, on Park Street—where a small brick dwelling now stands. At the bottom of this trench a brick tunnel was constructed, and the ground filled in above it. After all traces of these excavations had been obliterated, the work stopped and the lot was boarded up.

"Three months later, it was said to have been purchased from a speculator by the Earl of S——. Then other contractors began digging for the cellars under the house itself, and laying the main foundation walls. In the south wall, there is a space unaccounted for which provides ample room for a secret stairway, from both tunnel and secret vault, to the top of the house, and I think one of the biggest chimneys is a ventilating shaft. I'll venture to say you might search that house a dozen times—sounding the walls and floors—without discovering how one gets in or out of that tunnel and vault. They have been described—as melodramatic 'properties' of a good story; but who believes in their actual existence? People don't build houses that way in this Twentieth Century, you know; it simply isn't done. The mere suggestion of such things is one of the strongest arguments in favor of fictional unreality. Seems to me this fog is lifting a little! I think we can find our way around Buckingham Palace now, and down back of the Watney Brewery to the Embassy."

They managed to cross in front of the Palace without mishap, but the fog shut down again as they turned into

Catharine Street—one of the narrow byways in the maze between Buckingham Gate and Victoria Street. Unless directly over them, street lamps were not even an incandescent blur in the mist. House-railings ended abruptly in gateways—through which a false step might send one down in a nasty fall. The curb was a guide only as far as the next street—which one rarely crossed in a straight line. In the mist-laden atmosphere, there were eddies along which echoes of voices travelled with amazing distinctness, only to be snuffed out in the middle of a word. As they felt their way along in silence, foot by foot, toward Palace Street, a guttural voice which seemed less than ten feet away startled them to an abrupt standstill.

"*Ja!* The arranchments iss almost completed. In a few weeks, we get the final informations. Undt then these verdamten English will haf der taste of frightfulness on their own groundt, eh? Psst! Vas ist? We haf peen fol——" [There was a quick scuffling of feet on the wet pavement—a faint stirring of the mist.]

"Surrender—ye bloody 'Un! (Watch out for 'im on t'other side, O'Rourke! Head 'im hoff, below—Muggins!) Ah!—*Would* ye, now, ye bloody devil!" [The blaze and whang of an "automatic" cut loose in four stuttering shots.] "Then 'ave a taste of me b'yonit, damn ye, an' see 'ow hit feels!" [A death-scream pierced the mist, ending in a bubbling groan. There was a sound of running feet which, by luck, held straight up the narrow street. Then—the calm crisp voice of authority.]

"Who is it, Sergeant? That spy you've been trailing?"

"Aye, Sir! 'E kime hout of yon 'ouse, six hours gone—an' a fox runs back to 'is 'ole, if ye give 'im time. T'other

bloke got aw'y, but we've marked 'im well. Them bloody 'Uns is 'atchin' up somethin', Sir, but hI'm thinkin' we'll 'ave 'em in clink before they pulls it hoff!"

There was a shuffling tramp, as of many feet moving in concert with a heavy burden. For ten minutes, the two Americans leaned against a dripping railing—waiting for a chance to resume navigation with a minimum of risk. The spats of four soft-nosed bullets had scattered brick-dust within a few feet of their heads. From somewhere in the neighborhood, a big clock boomed two. Then the crisp New York and soft Virginian voices gradually trailed away until they were lost in the fog.

"Most stupendous times the world has ever seen! . . . . . Unbelievable things happening all about you when you least expect them——"

"Bewildering to one's senses, suh . . . . . a consciousness of struggling unreality. . . . . One accepts, as mattehs of co'se, the most impossible things—even yo' Diplomatic Free La——"

## CHAPTER II

### "THE ALDERSHOT AFFAIR"

AT THREE in the afternoon, a smart landaulet upholstered in Venetian-red suède rolled noiselessly up to the ladies' entrance of the Carlton Hotel. From his glass-enclosed sentry-box the doorman telephoned the reception office that the Condesa de la Monteneta's car was at the door, and one of the clerks repeated the information over the wire to Madame's suite on the third floor, where her two Moorish maids were assisting her into a hat and wrap just over from Paris—the envy of every woman who saw them. When she had descended in the lift, her footman—who, with the chauffeur, had also the appearance of being a Moor—assisted her into the landaulet.

As the Condesa's goings and comings were of interest to every one in the hotel on account of her undeniable beauty, taste in clothes, wealth, and social prominence, it was quite in the natural order of things for the page and chambermaids in charge of the third floor to be standing at the end of the corridor watching her as she came along to the lift. It was also a matter of daily occurrence for one of the maids to enter the room presently with an armful of clean towels and—attaching the hose to a baseboard-plug—groom the carpets and furniture with a vacuum-cleaner during Madame's absence. The two Moorish girls oc-

cupied a small room at the end of the suite and were usually more or less in evidence when any of the hotel employees came in—not that they appeared suspicious, but they were seldom out of sight long enough for outsiders to do any prying whatever. This time, however, the chambermaid heard them talking in one of the farther rooms as if they hadn't noticed her coming in—and she made the most of a long-awaited opportunity.

Leaning the nozzle of her cleaner against the door-casing, she went noiselessly over to the davenport where the Condesa's correspondence by the morning's post lay neatly piled. It seemed to be, however, the pigeonholes which particularly interested the girl. With practised rapidity, she ran through a number of papers and letters —opened the secret drawer which every one knows how to open in the usual desk of this sort—and then began going systematically through the pile of correspondence. After fifteen minutes or so, she became conscious of a pricking sensation through the left side of her corset. Turning, with a chill of apprehension, she saw a pair of gleaming black eyes over her left shoulder. The point of a slender Moorish knife, with a razor-like edge, was pressing gently yet painfully into her flesh—and she realized that one quick shove from the sinewy arm would send it through her heart.

"Thou hast the desire to read what is written to the great and beautiful one? *Aie!* Thou shalt tell her of thy desire when she returns. Until then shalt thou sit in that corner with folded arms—and one will sit by thee with this knife against thy side."

Perforce, the girl made the best of it. To her amaze-

ment, Madame la Condesa paid no attention to the tableau in the corner when she finally returned. The other maid removed her hat and wrap, followed her into the dressing-room, where she took off Madame's afternoon costume, and replaced it with a négligée. Then the Condesa walked leisurely out and sat down before the davenport. She spoke beautiful English, with here and there a pretty Spanish accent.

"Ah! You found her going through my papers, Ayesha? I see! I wonder what you discovered of interest among them, Meess? Let me see. You are the maid on thees floor, I believe? An' your name is Betty—the short for Elizabeth, of course—or—should I say Bettina—eh?"

To her utter amazement, the girl noticed a peculiar position of Madame's hand as she lightly touched a wisp of hair just above her ear. Half incredulously, the chambermaid closed her eyes for a second and let her teeth rest upon her lower lip. It was a natural facial expression of weariness or pain, and would have attracted no attention from anyone not particularly observant—but it was promptly answered by another imperceptible signal from Madame, who began to smile at the maid's confusion and amazement.

"If you could have assisted me, I should have made use of you before this, Betty. The Herr Chudleigh Sammis, who is Member of Parliament, told me there were two of you, and a man, in this hotel—but it is dangerous that more than a few of us should know one another. There are too many of the *Downing Street* people to watch each one and note with whom they appear to have a secret understanding. As to my papers here, I am quite sure you

found nothing to interest you. We of *Wilhelmstrasse* are not careless—as you know. But you will forget everything you have seen in this room—everything which concerns me in any way! You recognize this ring, do you not?" [She held out her left hand, upon one finger of which was a beautiful table-cut emerald which the maid knew at a glance was worn only by those high in authority among the *Wilhelmstrasse* secret agents.] "Very good! You will make no mistake in regard to me! If I find myself in danger and can make use of you, I will give the emergency signal. If I need your assistance with a secret communication, I will ring the bell of my suite three times—so! Meanwhile, you will hint to your two companions in the hotel that I am not to be interfered with or spied upon in any way. A hint should be enough—without giving them further information concerning me. If they do not take that hint, they are likely to hear from Berlin—unpleasantly. Now—you may go."

The girl knew that several women of the nobility were among the higher, inner circle of the German Secret Service, and had no doubts whatever that the Condesa was one of them. Dropping upon one knee, she kissed the hand extended to her—murmuring profuse apologies for her mistake, and then hurriedly left the suite.

A few moments later, Madame was about to dress for dinner when there was a knock at the outer door of the suite, and Ayesha admitted Lady Blanche Parker, who—with Colonel Sir Thomas Parker, K.C.B.—was occupying a suite upon the same floor of the hotel while her town house was being redecorated. She had been among the first to whom the Condesa had taken a personal fancy after

her arrival in London, and a somewhat intimate friendship had sprung up between them. Just now she appeared nervous—ill at ease.

"You were about to dress for dinner, Condesa? Don't let me delay you! May I come in and chat while you change?"

"I've really nothing on hand for the evening before eleven, my dear—and one should not talk confidentially before one's maids, don't you know. (You see? I have adopt' the English idiom. Si!) Let us remain here where there is nobody to overhear. I theenk you are not quite yourself. No. Tell me!"

"Oh—it's quite stupid of me to care! Men *do* such things—I suppose they don't really mean anything by it, half the time! Before this horrible war started, I thought I was the happiest woman in England! I loved my husband so much that I was foolish over him—I really did! And I hadn't the least doubt in the world that he returned it. We'd lived within a few miles of each other, in Hants, ever since we were born—I used to be crazy over the way he sat a horse when he rode to hounds—practised, day after day, so I could keep up with him and take the same jumps that he did. Then we settled down in *Feathercote* together, living a perfectly ideal life. Finally the war came—and I'd the awful dread that Tom would be among the first killed. I knew, of course, that his regiment would be sent at once, because they were veteran troops. He was slightly wounded near Lille and sent home. After he recovered, his capacity for organization got him a billet at one of the training camps; then he was transferred to Aldershot because it was his

home neighborhood and he knew practically everybody within a radius of twenty miles. He's been most successful in the recruiting, you know. Well, of course his duties gave him little time for me—but his business with the War Office made it advisable to spend at least half his nights in town, and I thought I should see a lot more of him, up here."

"And—don't you? I see you with el Señor Coronel in the beeg dining room almos' every evening."

"Yes—but his manner has been very much changed during the last few weeks. He is more preoccupied—gives me less of the old perfect companionship. To-day I found out *why!* I came into our suite rather quietly, and walked through to the room where he does his writing. He was sitting at his desk, as I expected. But—one of the hotel maids was standing by his side, leaning on his shoulder. His arm was around her, and he was—well—*hugging* her! She—she seemed to be enjoying it—the hussy!"

"Oh—as you say, my dear, men do those things without theenking twice about them. They consider it mere passing amusement. You may be sure you 'ave nothing serious to fear from a hotel servant—it would be quite too ridiculous! In the lifetime of my 'usband, El Conde de la Montaneta, he had that weakness—like other men. But I was la Doña Condesa—I never did notice such little occurrences when he was indiscreet. There was one—a mantilla-maker of Seville—who dance' mos' divinely. El Conde would take her for a ride in the country in hees grand motor-car—the poor theeng needed fresh air. But I could discover no difference in hees respec' an' affection for me—no—nevaire. Which of

the maids did el Señor Coronel honor with hees embrace?"

"The—the—well, I suppose some people might call her quite good-looking, in a bold, provocative way! It was that—that Betty woman!"

"So? El Coronel showed mos' perfec' taste when he married you, my dear—an' he compliments you by selecting a different but mos' handsome type for hees passing amour. The little Betty, she ees really beautiful, I theenk if one dressed her *au grande dame*. She ees plump—full of fire. What man with blood in hees veins could help the little embrace—perhaps a kiss or two—from a ripe little baggage like that, if there was opportunity and she was not unwilling! Eh, my dear? Pouf! Eet is nothing. A moment's relaxation—to lighten the anxieties of hees professional work. Come! I will propose you a diversion. You trust me, do you not? You do not theenk I would deliberately rob you of your 'usband's love?"

"You—rob me—Condesa? I—I don't understand!"

"I will be more plain. I weesh to show the young wife that passing flirtation ees merely a game weeth mos' men—that it has nothing to do with the love they have for their wives. It ees merely the excitement of the chase—the capture—the collecting tribute. Look you, my dear! You shall throw me in the society of el Señor Coronel—arrange that we shall be tête-à-tête, with no one to observe an' listen. Me—I am handsome woman, no? I shall make your 'usband to flirt weeth me—and forget the little Betty entirely. When I get him ver' much work' up, I shall make him to laugh with me at the game we both play. I shall keess him good-bye and say the

joke mus' not go further any more because you are my dear friend and would be annoy' if you should discover us when we were careless. Then will he be punish' for the little Betty, with her neat ankles an' pretty figure. He will remember that yours are much prettier—and—and belong to him. You see?"

"Yes—I see. But—suppose you should fall in love with Tom yourself? I—I'd be afraid of you, Condesa!"

"I would make el Coronel Tom *theenk* I loved him, my dear—an' you also would theenk so until we 'ave the final laugh. But, for me, there is one man in all the world. He is married man. I shall never have him—even if hees wife die, he might never marry me. But once, he save' my life an' nearly lost hees own. From then, I am loving him more than everything in the world! With other men, I flirt to pass the time. *Sí!* Why not? But none of them shall have me—except that one. When Andalusians really love, eet ees forever!"

Lady Parker's eyes were star-like with admiration. "Oh! That is something perfectly ideal, Condesa! I—I could love Tom like that if—if I thought he cared for me the same way! I suppose I mustn't try to guess who it is?"

"It ees better not, my dear. If you desire, I shall flirt weeth your 'usband, an' distrac' hees mind. But I will not love heem—I promise you that. You shall stan' behind the scenes an' see the game. When you tire of it, I will stop playing."

About one o'clock in the morning, a clerk in the hotel office—very well liked by the guests, on account of his pleasant manner and ability for straightening out their

various grievances—went quietly from his room in the employees' quarters up to the roof over the Haymarket side. As one of those who conducted the business of the hotel, his presence in any part of it, at any hour, would have been accepted as being in the line of his duties. So also, to a lesser extent, the third-floor chambermaid, Betty—who appeared upon the roof a few moments later, gazing into the murky atmosphere overhead in a terrified search for bomb-dropping zeppelins.

The few detached areas of flat roof, above the curved and sloping mansards, had been protected in a way that made demolition of the building unlikely. Their surface had been covered to a depth of three feet with bags of sand—and above the mansards which sloped toward the inner courts had been stretched a canopy of steel wire netting. After the one rather disastrous raid of German dirigibles, two watchmen had been stationed on the roofs, each night, to warn guests upon the upper floors in case of another—but their services had been discontinued after a while because of their doubtful utility in such an emergency. So that—excepting some of the help whose fears or curiosity impelled them to go up at night for a look around—the roofs were deserted.

As Betty stepped cautiously over the sand bags toward one of the farther chimneys, she stopped to gaze upward as if looking for a dirigible. Her actions were so entirely natural that, had anyone been watching her, it is doubtful if he would have been suspicious. Eventually, she stepped around behind a massive chimney—where Mr. James Crofton, the office clerk, was imperturbably smoking an excellent cigar.

As he noticed the direction from which she had approached, he started, apprehensively.

"Gott! Bettina! You came over the middle of those bags—yess?"

"Why, of course I did! Suppose anyone had been watching? It would never do to give an impression of skulking about, up here!"

"So? Better that risk than get blown to the devil before you have accomplished your work! Look you, Bettina! At every yard distance, all over this roof, is a bag of sand in which there are one or more sticks of dynamite. Your weight upon the loosely packed sand is sufficient to explode a stick, if it happened to come just right! If *one* explodes, they'll *all* go off! When just one little bomb from a zeppelin happens to drop on this roof, it must surely set off all the dynamite! There's enough of it up here to destroy every building within a hundred yards! I've planted those sticks, one at a time, and if we hear an explosion in another part of the city, we must get out of this hotel as quickly as we can dress!"

"Ach, Gott! Johann—this is terrible! It is not as if we were killing the English soldiers! If your dynamite goes off, it will kill all these pretty little children in the hotel—the young girls, just coming to their marrying time. *They* have done Germany no harm!"

"Woman—such talk is foolishness! Those *kinder* will grow up to be Englander men and women—mothers of Englander soldiers! They must be taught to *fear* Germany! That fear must be foremost in the mothers' minds—so the children will be marked with it! They must know it iss not *safe* to defy the kaiser as they haf done!"

"But, look you, Johann—these English only swear to fight us the more when we do such things! There has been no trouble in recruiting since the zeppelins came! I have been here much longer than you, and our campaigns of 'frightfulness' have had just the opposite effect from what we expected!"

"Ach! You are a woman! You cannot understand these things like the officers of our General Staff! But enough! Tell me what you haf discovered among the papers of the Condesa."

"Suppose you tell *me*, Johann, why you thought there might be anything of interest to us among them?"

"I am told by Karl Berndorf that the Condesa's family were practically unknown before she married the Conde de la Montaneta, six years ago—which is suspicious. Spanish grandees do not marry that sort of women, except morganatically. She hass, with her, four servants who are supposed to be Moors. They talk with each other in Arabic—very true—but in much too pure Arabic for the Moors of Tangier or Cadiz, where Madame came from. Since her arrival in London she hass become quite intimate with some of the most brominent men and women in the country—she could scarcely haf brought letters that would haf secured such an entrée for her in a space of seven or eight weeks. She spends money as if her wealth were almost unlimited—yet Berndorf was quite possitive that the old Conde's estates in Andalusia had become very much curtailed before his death. I don't know, exactly, what to make of her, myself. Her Castilian iss so perfect that she must be Spanish, and yet——"

"She is probably of the Austrian Court circle, my friend

—with a family dating back to Charles Fifth, or earlier, which accounts for her Spanish blood and home. And she is of *Wilhelmstrasse*, like ourselves—only far higher in authority. By the ring she wears, I think she must be one of the Imperial Special Agents. One of her Moorish maids caught me going through the papers in her desk, and held a knife against my ribs for three long hours—until Madame returned. I thought I must be drugged or dreaming when she casually gave me the first recognition sign—it made me feel like a fool! Getting caught at her papers like a clumsy sneak-thief, when some of those Cabinet men are probably dropping Government secrets to her which neither you nor I could get if our lives depended upon it! Oh, they wouldn't know they were telling her anything dangerous for England! Trust her for that! But the woman is a hypnotist and a mind-reader. She said that the Herr Chudleigh Sammis had told her there were three of us in this hotel—and I'm beginning to think she must have been working with him in influencing the Cabinet Ministers."

"*Himmel!* And I never even dreamed! It explains those Moorish servants, too! They must be high-caste Hindu revolutionists—the sort who will stop at nothing so long as they smash the English *Raj!* Valuable tools, if one knows how to handle them! Look you, Bettina! The Condesa hass become most intimate with Lady Parker—the Herr Colonel iss fascinated with her; I saw him looking at her as she talked with her ladyship in the foyer, last night. Why wouldn't she haf a better chance than you to obtain the plans from him?"

"She might—if he were anywhere near her own rank.

But—women of her position do not go as far as those in our station of life—to obtain what *Wilhelmstrasse* requires. They will risk and sacrifice life—yes, if necessary. But giving *themselves* is something they are not likely to do. I'll admit that they're often successful, without."

"Er—you would pay the price, if necessary—Bettina?"

"That's something you'll never know—it's none of your business! I think I can make the Colonel tell me anything I want to know—when the conditions are just right. But if I can't, I'll ask Madame's assistance; you need have no doubts upon that score! Katrina heard Her Ladyship accepting an invitation for charity bridge to-morrow afternoon—when the Colonel is likely to be at Aldershot—and he asked me if I would come to their suite about three, with the vacuum-cleaner. He's quite sure to be there."

On the following day Lady Parker motored away from the hotel at half-past two—Sir Thomas being presumably at Aldershot. It occurred to her that he might run up to the city earlier than usual and amuse himself with the pretty chambermaid if she happened to be on duty at that hour—but the Condesa had talked to such good purpose that she believed it merely a passing foolishness upon her husband's part which she would better ignore, and she was dwelling with mischievous anticipation upon his punishment for it when the Condesa herself should take a hand. So she was in no hurry to return before it was time to dress for dinner.

At a few moments after three, Betty—in her dainty apron and short black skirt—came to Sir Thomas's door with the reel of vacuum-hose and long nozzle, letting her-

self in with a pass-key but taking care to bolt the door on the inside. As on a previous occasion, the Colonel was at his desk in the sitting room. While pointing out what he wished done, he managed to get a half-reluctant kiss or two that made him hungry for more. Presently, he told her to let the cleaning go for a while—and drew her down upon the sofa by his side.

"Betty, you use a dev'lish sight better language than any hotel chambermaid I ever saw! I'd be quite int'rested, don't you know, if you'd tell me all about yourself an' how you happen to be in such a position as this. Might be able to help you on a bit, d'ye see—one never can say. I fancy your family are a cut above the ord'n'ry lot—what?"

"Oh, my people were really very decent, sir. My father was a younger son of Major Bundy, who served in the Crimea—one of the Dorset Bundys, you know. There wasn't money enough to purchase a commission for him after his eldest brother went into the Guards, so he took orders and was appointed curate of a small parish on the Shaftesbury estates. He was made rector when we girls were in our 'teens, but died a year afterward—and of course, left us practically nothing. The living was a small one. My mother died several years before, and my sister married a small tradesman in Southampton. So there was nothing left for me to do but go out in service. We'd been decently educated, of course—I could have obtained a position as governess, but the wages are not so high as I get here, and I have a few hours to myself, every day. These grand hotels require maids who have some education—enough taste to assist the guests with their clothes,

if necessary—and present an attractive appearance. When my father was living, my social position was good enough to permit of my calling upon any family in the county—while now, I'm a servant, and must know my place. But I'm much more independent, here, and am putting by a good bit of money each month. In a few years I shall go to America and open a little millinery shop. Over there I'm as good as anybody."

"Faith, and so you are in London—if people only knew it! I suppose you make a bit in tips, as well?"

"Perhaps more than you'd think, Sir Thomas. To a girl who has scrimped and denied herself even necessities while trying to be a lady on nothing a year, it's quite too ridiculous to have a fat dowager give one half a sovereign merely for selecting her most becoming gown, and turning her out at her very best for some dinner party! And the men! Why, I've had an old duke give me three sovereigns for promising to forget all about it after I'd slapped his face for trying to kiss me!"

"Eh? What's that? Do you mean to say it's an ord'n'ry occurrence for men to—er—take advantage of your position—and—er—kiss you? My word!"

"No. There's a difference—between kissing one and —well—trying to do it."

"But what—eh? Dash it all, you know—I've—eh? And I believe I've never tipped you a penny—as yet! Leave all that sort of thing to Her Ladyship, don't you know! Of course, if I'd known about your family—inexcusable liberty, you know! Quite welcome to slap me if you wish! And—er——"

"I trust, Sir Thomas, that you've too much taste and

good sense to offer me money, now that you know something of my private affairs. I permitted you to do what you did because you have always treated me kindly—never taken a low advantage of me. There's no great harm in your kissing me, I fancy—but if you were seen doing it, I should probably lose my position here. I should have to complain of you to the management. Rather than have any trouble with a wealthy guest, they'd give me the sack."

"Faith, you need have no fears upon that score! If they discharged you, I'd find something better at once—or see that you had a good start in some other place. I say, Betty—er—do you know, I—I think an awful lot of you! 'Pon honor, I do! I say! Would it be possible for me to see you outside, anywhere? When do you—er—get out of the hotel? Where do you go?"

"I have three evenings off each week. Sometimes I go to a cinema show with two of the other maids. Occasionally, Mr. Crofton takes me out to a burlesque—or to one of the Strand restaurants for dinner. Or we go to a dance hall, where he teaches me the latest steps."

"Crofton? You mean the clark in the hotel office? Decent young fellow, that! You're not engaged to him—what?"

"No fear! Why did you wish to know that?"

"Well—d'ye see—after all, y'know, Crofton's merely a middle-class chap—not *your* sort, really. And—er—I'd jolly well like to have you go about with *me*—if we can manage it. And—er——"

"You couldn't take me to a theatre, Sir Thomas, or any public place where Her Ladyship might see us. Of course,

when I am dressed for the street or for an evening out, I fancy no one in the hotel would recognize me. But still, Her Ladyship must be very well known in London society."

"Er—quite so, my dear. But I've cousins and other women relatives, d'ye see, whom I freq'ntly show the sights when they're up for a day or so. If Her Ladyship happens to run across us—most unlikely, don't you know—I can introduce you as one of 'm—or—er—one of a brother officer's family, d'ye see?—up from Aldershot for the evenin.' Eh? Meet me to-morrow evenin' in the lounge at the Cecil—an' we'll go somewhere for dinner—make a night of it. Eh? You will? That's jolly! Now—eh? Just one more kiss to seal the bargain?"

For a second or two her lips clung to his with a warmth that made him dizzy; then she was gone. He sat down at his desk and foolishly tried to fix his attention upon the papers he had been examining.

Two weeks later she accompanied him to his town house in order that he might show her some books and pictures which he had recently purchased. The decorators had finished their work. His butler had been up from Hampshire, superintending the cleaning for a day or two, and had finally returned—leaving the house ready for occupancy at any time he should be ordered to bring up the requisite staff of servants. A watchman inspected the premises, outside, at intervals—but the Colonel had told him that he should be working late, that night, with his private secretary. They had the house to themselves.

She had met him, that evening, in a chiffon gown of

dark green which amazed him by its perfect taste and the way it set off her blonde prettiness. How she had managed to dress in such a garment in the servants' quarters of a hotel he couldn't understand. [She had really gone, with her maid's uniform covered by a mackintosh, to the house of a very respectable widow in Soho—a place which had been a secret rendezvous of German spies since the third month of the war—and changed there.] They had dined at a quiet but famous restaurant just off Pall Mall, and the Colonel had taken rather more than his usual allowance of champagne. When he produced two cobwebby bottles of Burgundy from his own cellar she made no remonstrance—but, had he noticed it, there was a calculating look in her eyes. She had learned, before this, about how much stimulation was needed to loosen his tongue—but the exact point at which mind and memory became oblivious to what he did was still a little uncertain. How far to let him go in his drinking—where to stop him before he became drowsily speechless—was a matter of nice calculation.

Early that afternoon the Condesa had motored to the Trevor mansion in Park Lane. Had any of her acquaintances been in the drawing room when she was admitted—presumably to call upon Lady Trevor—they would have been much astonished by the liberties she took. Running upstairs to Her Ladyship's boudoir, she closed the door and called up the Foreign Office, asking the operator to "put her on" to the private office of Sir Edward Wray, *Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.* In a moment his voice came over the wire, saying that he would motor out to Park Lane at once. She received

him in the big library on the ground floor fifteen minutes later.

"What mare's nest have you been stirring up, Nan?"

"You've been looking up Colonel Sir Thomas Parker, as I asked?"

"Aye—but there's nothing fishy that we can discover—except his weakness for women. An' that's hereditary, you know."

"I had supposed it must be" (dryly). "Tell me all you know about the man, Ned. I've heard of his courtship and marriage—in fact, pretty much everything Lady Blanche could give me."

"Well—let me see. He was a son of General Sir Harrington Parker, who was on the staff of Engineers in the 'sixties' and had a good deal to do with the permanent improvements at Aldershot in 1890. It's within ten miles of *Feathercote*—the Parker estate in Hampshire—you know. Sir Thomas was a lad of eighteen at the time the reconstruction was started—and, during his vacations, he rode all over the place with his father. Had a taste for engineering even then—and was permitted to superintend bits of the minor construction work occasionally. I fancy he must have preserved every plan his father drew—because the War Office is finding his knowledge of Aldershot and other military camps valuable even now, and he frequently runs over to *Feathercote* for the purpose of consulting old drawings on file there."

"Do you know whether duplicates of those drawings were preserved in the War Office?"

"Never had occasion to look up anything of the sort—but, unquestionably, there must have been."

"Do you suppose Kitchener has men in his department who would be able to put their hands on those Aldershot drawings within half an hour or so?"

"I fancy there'll be no doubt of that. I'll have them put me on to him, and ask to have the papers sent here at once, if you think they'll be of use to us." (The telephoning was a matter of but a few moments—War Office calls having right of way.)

"Well—go on with the Colonel's history. We've not finished with that, yet. When a man of forty-three has as young and pretty a wife as Lady Blanche, quite devoted to him, why does he kiss pretty chambermaids in a hotel, if he's presumably sober?"

"Eh? My word! Been up to that sort of thing, has he? Er—just casually, as anyone might, or is he taking her on for a continuous performance?"

"Well—I fancy he's had her out to dinner and the theatre more than once."

"Humph! Must be a cut above the ord'n'ry hotel maid! Is she pretty? Good taste in clothes?"

"Quite! She's a *Wilhelmstrasse* woman, Ned. What I'm trying to get at is her chance of pumping him for anything he may know."

"Why—h-m-m-m! Might be a bit serious if there were anything in his head that *Wilhelmstrasse* desired to know! For at least five or six generations the men of his family have been unable to resist a pretty woman. His great-grandfather jilted an English lady to run off with the princess of a small German State. Their marriage was never recognized, and he was killed in a duel with her cousin. His grandfather married a baroness—lovely

woman, four beautiful children—and lived openly with a well-known *prima donna* in Paris. His father had various *affaires* in different parts of the world—wherever the War Office sent him on engineering work. They've all been quite open about it, don't you know—never seem to realize that what they do is anything more than a peccadillo which anyone of taste should ignore. They've all been fond of their wives and families, too—but there's something in the blood which catches fire at the glimpse of a pretty face or ankle. The trait is not uncommon. There's many a prominent and respectable man in London who has it.

"The principal thing which int'rests me in this affair of Sir Thomas's is what the little baggage may get out of him—and from the information at our disposal, I can think of practically nothing! The Colonel has no knowledge of where troops are going when they leave Aldershot. His work deals with barrack-construction—seeing that the various units are quartered to advantage for prompt assembling and departure when the orders come—sanitary matters—that sort of thing. He's not in position to know anything about munition-supply, new guns, new aeroplanes, or anything like that. Of course, he must have some knowledge that Germany would like to obtain, but it's second-hand when it comes to him; he's not the man from whom they'd attempt to get it. (Ah, here comes Leftenant Graham, from the War Office, with a bundle of papers—the Aldershot drawings, no doubt.) I say, Nan—you'd best disappear until I've sent him off again, don't you know! The Condesa de la Montaneta isn't supposed to be int'rested in anything of this sort—and

I fancy you've no intention of discarding your make-up at present."

When the lieutenant had delivered the Aldershot drawings to Sir Edward and had left the house, Lady Nan—still with the black hair, darker complexion, and fuller figure of the Condesa—returned to the library, and they sat down to a study of the various plans in detail. The earlier sketches appeared to have been submitted to the War Office for a reconstruction of Aldershot Camp prior to those adopted during the administration of Secretary Stanhope in 1890. These were followed by the tentative plans subsequently approved, in part—including the replacing of the old wooden huts of the Crimean period by substantial brick and stone barracks. Considerable attention appeared to have been given the question of water supply—a number of drawings illustrating plans for bringing pure drinking water from streams or ponds at considerable distance. The system eventually carried out was found in its proper place, and was shown as completed in a survey made of the district in 1898—evidently a tracing from General Parker's original. It was Lady Nan who presently discovered upon this old survey of the General's some dotted lines which represented a four-foot main of cast-iron piping—not connected with the system which had been adopted, but leading off northwestward from a point near Fleet Pond, and terminating in the woods of Bramshill Common eight miles away. An asterisk called her attention to a note upon the margin of the tracing, in writing so fine and faded with age that she used a magnifying glass to read it.

Dotted lines represent section of four-foot water main laid underground at time the work was abandoned. Part of Sir John Folkham's plan in 1884 for bringing water from River Kennet, six miles S. W. of Reading. Was to have been emergency supply—location of line known only to Engineer Corps, in whose charge pumping station was to have been maintained. Plan was approved by Her Majesty, the Queen—but after ten months' work it was decided by War Office that artesian wells could be sunk, if necessary, at far less expense.

For several moments Lady Nan studied the dotted lines on the tracing, noting the location of turnpikes and other roads which crossed them between Aldershot and the spot where they terminated. Then she took from one of the library files a section of Bartholomew's half-inch-to-the-mile topographic map covering Berkshire, with the borders of Hampshire and Surrey.

"Ned, this is what *Wilhelmstrasse* is after—the original of this tracing! They want to know the exact survey-line of that old, long-forgotten water main. It must be there, just as it was laid down over thirty years ago. Probably a good deal eaten with rust, and yet, with neither water nor fresh air in it for all that time, there wouldn't be so much oxidization, after all. Now, what possible use could any German spy in England make of that water main? The Aldershot end of it is at the extreme westerly edge of the camp. Even if they had men enough in Berkshire, they couldn't get them crawling through that pipe fast enough to surprise the troops now camped around Aldershot; we must have over two hundred thousand there at this moment. My word! That's a lot of men, isn't it—for one instruction camp!

"Do you suppose that's the idea working in the German mind—a force of nearly a quarter of a million picked troops bunched within a limited radius? Couldn't have anything to do with a zeppelin attack, could it, Ned? I say! We're getting warm, don't you think? And we've spent all the time we need to on these drawings. The location of that old water main is undoubtedly what they're trying to get out of Sir Thomas—and that pretty little devil Betty will somehow manage it before she's through with him. Hmph! I shall have to take a hand in this—there's not a moment to lose! Is Achmet out there with my car? Let me lock this tracing in George's safety vault, down underground, and you take the rest back to Kitchener with my best love and thanks for the loan of them. . . . Oh, wait a moment! Perhaps I'd better keep one of those other drawings with this one—I think I can use it to advantage. Any one of the final plans will do!"

The Condesa knew that Sir Thomas's duties would keep him at Aldershot most of the following afternoon. Starting at two o'clock, she motored the thirty-three miles in something over an hour—and was in the ladies' room at the Officers' Club, with the wife of a well-known general, when Sir Thomas came in for his tea before running up to town. As both were returning in time to dress for dinner at the Carlton, she invited him to accompany her—an opportunity which he accepted with every appearance of unexpected pleasure. The Colonel admired his wife's distinguished friend extremely, but hadn't dared, for obvious reason, to make any advances in the way of flirtation; so when she started in with him on a basis of friendly intimacy, he began to imagine himself a devil

of a fellow with the women. By the time they reached town, the flirtation had progressed far enough for her to agree that she would accompany him, that evening, to a rather exclusive cabaret in the West End, patronized by well-known musicians and writers. She was the woman-of-the-world in every word and action—so brilliant in repartee that his duller wits found it difficult to keep pace with her. One of the handsomest women in London—alluring, provocative, and beginning to be a celebrity. He knew, the moment they entered the cabaret, that her presence with him added materially to his reputation. Under conditions of this sort his infatuation was a foregone conclusion.

Inside of a week it had reached a point where he scarcely looked up from his papers when Betty came into his suite at the Carlton—which provoked and alarmed that intriguing young person. Before the Condesa took a hand in the game, she had obtained a part of what she hoped to get from him, but it wasn't enough for her purpose. Furthermore, she was in doubt as to where she stood with the Condesa—who certainly appeared to be interfering as far as Sir Thomas Parker was concerned. Bettina, however, gave no indication of having noticed this—until she went into the Condesa's suite, one day, and was invited to sit down for a chat after the Moorish maids had been sent from the room.

"Betty—you remember the day you were interested in my papers, and spent a few uncomfortable hours being prodded by Ayesha's knife?"

"Oh, yes, madame. I think your maid would have enjoyed killing me!"

"Had you made any resistance she most certainly *would* have killed you! That girl is worth her weight in *kronen* to anyone in our position! Well, you learned something about me which surprised you—even as we were surprised to know that you also were of *Wilhelmstrasse*. Since then we have ignored your connection with Berlin—and of course you've paid no further attention to me in that respect. Still, one cannot help noticing things which are apparent for anyone to see. I was in a theatre-box, one evening, when you sat in the stalls with Colonel Sir Thomas Parker. I could only guess at your object in cultivating him—until he began paying *me* very marked attentions. Then I heard all about his father's connection with Aldershot, and knew that you must be working upon the plan which was under consideration several months ago. My own work has been in a different quarter altogether—in fact, I know nothing of the details which have been worked out in your affair. But an opportunity presented itself, unexpectedly, to pick up something which I am quite sure you can use to advantage. I didn't dare keep it—so made a tracing upon strong parchment tissue, at a certain house where I was sure of being undisturbed, and put the original back where I found it."

She drew from a drawer in her davenport a tracing of the old Folkham Water System, just as it had been drawn by General Parker in 1884, showing the dotted lines of the four-foot main, which had been partly laid down and then abandoned. Betty picked up a large reading glass and eagerly examined the drawing—going over it with an attention to detail which indicated considerable knowledge of engineering.

"It will be useful, madame, because the original—which we stole from a library drawer at *Feathercote*—Sir Thomas's place in Hampshire—was accidentally destroyed. A draught blew it into a sea-coal fire at our rendezvous in Soho. I was hoping—really hoping—that you had managed by sheer luck to obtain a plan of the present tent-encampments on Laffan's Plain and Farnborough Common—including the new barracks in the North and South Camps. That is the only thing we need to complete our preparations. The attempt should be made within a fortnight, because the number of troops now drilling there is larger than any future concentration is likely to be. The time to strike is now—as soon as we possibly can! The weather predictions are for a week or more of fog and rain—ideal conditions for the attempt!"

"You had already located the line of that four-foot main?"

"Six months ago! Our spies near Aldershot had talked with some of the older villagers west of the camp who remembered when the pipe was laid down, but couldn't point out the exact line. It was that report which started the discussion in Berlin. We leased three old manor houses in different localities. Two are near Hartford Bridge, and the other is on the border of the woods northeast of Bramshill Park House. There are thirty-five acres belonging to this manor—almost entirely wooded. We made borings in several places, and had the luck to strike the main less than three hundred feet from the house. It was a simple matter to excavate a tunnel from the cellar to it, but it took us a month before we could locate the line as far as the woods of Blackbushes, and tap

it for ventilation without being caught. Of course, the air in it would have killed anyone attempting to crawl through before that. By the end of the second month we had rigged a little track for a miniature car and cleaned out the entire length to the first section, north of Fleet Pond at Aldershot. Then we commenced tunnelling in two directions, one toward the North Camp and the other toward the South Camp, with provision for piping under the present tent-encampments on Laffan's Plain, Farnborough Common, and Long Valley. That work has been completed. Our tunnels are twenty feet underground; we don't dare go upward toward the surface until we know exactly where we can shove up the ends of two-inch pipes without detection."

"You have your materials all assembled for the work—when the time comes?"

"Oh, yes, madame. We excavated a large chamber, underground, and brought in the machinery piece by piece. We run the place as a stock farm—breeding horses. The stables are fifteen hundred feet from the manor house, so that army officers who come to purchase mounts very rarely stop there. With nearly two hundred horses, mares, and foals, we use a great deal of hay and straw. All of our lime and acid—the glazed tiling for the storage tank and the conduit through the big water main—has been fetched to us inside great loads of hay and straw for the stables. It has been slow work, getting the amount we needed for the attempt, but it is amazing how much can be accumulated in six months. For the past fortnight we have been running eight air-compressors by small paraffin motors and storing the liquid chlorine in an air-

tight, porcelain-lined reservoir adjoining that underground chamber. The manor house stands upon high ground, and the big water main was laid twenty-five feet below the surface at that point—so the liquid chlorine will run down into, and along it, by gravity. The end section of the main at Aldershot is a hundred feet lower than that at Bramshill Park, and we have laid a porcelain-lined conduit through it for the entire distance, to carry the stuff. From the end of that conduit we will connect two-inch cast-iron pipes and shove them a few inches above the ground in spots among the tents and barracks where they will not be noticed—admitting the chlorine to them through a heavy gate-valve at the proper moment."

"You speak as though you had seen all these preparations yourself, Bettina!"

"I have, madame. It was necessary for me to know exactly what papers and drawings we required. Of course, if we cannot obtain the plan of the tent-encampments, we must take our chances in coming up to the surface at spots determined by an underground survey—but that greatly increases the risk."

"Suppose I succeed in obtaining that plan for you? I wonder if it would be safe for me to fetch it down to that manor house? Do you raise thoroughbreds at that stock farm? I ride in the Park every morning. That would be a perfectly reasonable excuse for motoring down there."

"Oh, yes, Madame—and Franz Schufeldt would feel much honored if you would inspect his work. One never knows whether he will succeed or fail in an attempt like this, but it helps his standing in *Wilhelmstrasse* if it is

known that he performed his part of the work faithfully, It would please us much, madame, if you would inspect the work and report it in Berlin."

"The only point to be considered is whether by any chance my visit to that manor house might be remembered afterward, and arouse suspicion? We couldn't afford that —because my work is even more important than yours."

"We have sold horses to several of the aristocracy, madame—besides the army. You would be safe enough at the stables. And Franz could offer you tea at the manor house."

Three days later the Condesa motored down to Hampshire and had little difficulty in locating the Bramshill Stock Farm owned by Mr. Frank Sheffield—a genial, fox-hunting county squire whom nobody would have thought of being other than a roast-beef Englishman. After purchasing a beautiful chestnut mare for saddle use she accepted his courteous suggestion of tea, and gave him a lift in her car to the manor house. When secure from observation in his study she handed him a flat parcel which she had been carrying in her muff. When he unfolded this upon his desk it proved to be a tracing of the plan, less than ten months old, upon which the tent-encampments and new permanent barracks had been laid out—in fact, a detailed survey of everything in the Aldershot district, with smaller sheets of each camp.

After going over it for half an hour he led her down into the cellar by a concealed stairway and, through a tunnel, into the large underground chamber where the air-compressors, vats, and great storage reservoir were. From

one corner of this he took her through a descending tunnel which ended in the old four-foot water main. Here he showed her the porcelain-lined conduit which had been laid along the bottom of the piping—providing an inner sluiceway for the liquid chlorine, sixteen inches wide and six high. At either side of this had been laid small rails upon which ran a miniature flat-car about large enough to carry an average-sized man, lying at full length. At one end of it was an electric motor, fed from a storage battery—and through the line of piping there was a strong current of fresh air from an electrically driven fan. Madame was strongly tempted to explore the entire seven miles of piping and inspect the system of tunnelling under Aldershot—but it would have taken at least three hours, and her long stay at the manor house might have been remembered.

After she had left him, Mr. Sheffield (or Franz Schufeldt, as he was known in Berlin) motored over to Aldershot, with the details of the tracings fixed in his mind, and satisfied himself that they were correct in every particular.

Next evening proved rainy and foggy. At ten o'clock a company of sappers left the South Camp in two motor-vans and disappeared, around Fleet Pond, on the road which led through Blackbushes. In the heart of the woods they came upon a cavalry patrol sitting his horse where a little blind path left the road—which was a rough one, seldom used. Following him along this path, they came to a big oak—in the bark of which they could just make out the lines of what had once been engineering symbols cut many years before. Here, after lighting a

dozen lanterns, they began digging a hole ten feet in diameter—using great care to work as noiselessly as possible. At a depth of four feet they came upon a big cylindrical something which they carefully avoided striking with their spades. After two hours' work they had dug down at each side of the great cylinder until they could stow a number of packages under it.

Twice, while digging, they had heard a rumbling sound inside which seemed to approach from the westward and then recede again. Each time this occurred they stood without making a sound until the noise had died away entirely. When their preparations were complete, several ends from a main wire were attached to the packages under the big cylinder and they walked back to the road, paying out the wire after them. Then one of the engineers turned a crank in a square box—and there was a stunning concussion which shook the ground for a radius of half a mile. Groping their way back to where they had been digging, they found a yawning pit twenty feet deep and a hundred feet in diameter. The mangled trunks of a dozen trees had fallen into it, and upon opposite sides were torn and twisted sections of four-foot iron piping—choked solid with débris. Leaving guards at the edge of the pit, the sappers climbed into their motor-vans and returned to Aldershot.

In the meanwhile, three troops of cavalry had ridden by another road to Bramshill Park, silently drawing a cordon about the stock farm and manor house—concealing themselves behind trees and shrubbery. There they waited until some men from the house came along in a car. These were quietly arrested and sent to Aldershot.

In the next two hours several other men and one woman came from the house and stables, being arrested like their fellows. At ten in the morning the troopers closed in, but the house appeared to be deserted, and the underground chambers also. Dynamite was then placed in various places, and the entire plant blown out of existence, after the troopers had ridden to a sufficient distance to be safe from the liberated chlorine in the big reservoir.

Late that evening Madame la Condesa—beautifully gowned for the opera—was awaiting the arrival of her escort, a Cabinet Minister, when there was a faint tapping at the door of her suite, and Ayesha admitted the girl Betty. When they were alone, with the doors locked, Betty staggered to a chair—her teeth chattering. Pouring a glass of wine, the Condesa held it to her lips until she had swallowed it—then said, guardedly:

"Wait a few moments until your nerves are steadier, my dear. You increase the danger for all of us by going to pieces in this way!"

"I know that, madame—oh, I *know* it! But—every second, I seem to feel the hand upon my shoulder; I fear some man I never saw before will take me by the elbow and whisper in my ear that I must go with him—quietly, without any show of resistance—as they did to poor Johann in the hotel office half an hour ago! It was done just as quietly as that. Johann knew—but he spoke to the manager and asked if he could go out for an hour or two with the gentleman upon a matter of importance; then he put on his hat and coat and walked out with the man, smoking a cigarette. It was the same with Katrina, on the second floor! A gentleman spoke to her in the

corridor—told her to get into the servants' lift and go up to her room for her wraps. He didn't let her out of his sight a second—made her walk out of the servants' entrance ahead of him! She knew there was no escape—so she didn't try to run away in the street. Mr. Chudleigh Sammis had been spending half an hour with Colonel Parker in his suite on this floor. He saw me in the corridor when he came out—whispered that he was leaving by the night train for Liverpool, and sailing on one of the Lamport and Holt steamers for Buenos Ayres; said he would tell the reporters that he was going down to study labor conditions in Argentina."

"The worst move he could possibly make—dangerous for all of us! Looks suspicious! They'll never let him sail! We must try to catch him on the telephone! What is it all about, anyhow?"

"Haven't you seen the evening papers, madame? It is said that someone at Aldershot heard a faint noise underground which made him suspect our tunnelling. Some of the Engineer officers looked up the old reconstruction drawings, traced that line of water main, suspected our stock farm, and began watching it. Last night the sappers dynamited a section of the piping in the woods two miles west of Aldershot. This morning a cavalry detail arrested nine of us from the manor house—found your tracings and other papers in Franz's desk—and blew up the whole plant. It is thought that half a dozen men, including Franz himself, are buried alive in the tunnels under the camps. The others were all shot at sunset. Johann and Katrina will be shot in the morning—or hanged—in the Tower, where they were taken."

"Do you think that any of them betrayed you or the rest of us in London?"

"No, madame; they died without any admission of their *Wilhelmstrasse* connection, I am sure. But if Sir Thomas by any chance remembers what he told me in the library of his town house—the night he was drunk there, alone with me—or if the disappearance of those plans is traced to you, madame—well, that would settle it!"

"Bettina, in the game we play, nothing is more certain to arouse suspicion than the slightest evidence of apprehension. I have faced death more than once with a laugh of amazed denial upon my lips—when I could see no possible escape, and believed my life was measured only by seconds. Never admit being guilty even while you are dying! That is a principle in all underground diplomacy. Do not compromise others even if you must yourself die! The safest place in the world for Chudleigh Sammis is on the floor of the House of Commons—representing his constituency. The safest place for you and me, just now, is right here in this hotel—doing exactly what we've been doing every day! I doubt if the management knows anything whatsoever against you. Your duties here constitute an almost perfect alibi."

Considerably reassured, Betty left the Condesa's suite and tried to forget her haunting terror in the activities demanded by her position. But for a fortnight several of the guests who really liked the girl thought from her paleness and lassitude that she must be coming down with a serious illness. In the room she occupied with three other girls, up under the roof, the dread of a zep-

pelin raid and annihilation from the dynamite in the sand bags over her head was enough to prevent her sleeping for more than a few moments at a time. Upon the streets, the passing glance of any unknown man sent a chill down her back which made her feel faint. One night—at the house in Soho—she typed a warning to the hotel management concerning the dynamite. When no attention was paid to it, she sent another anonymous warning—and was immensely relieved when finally the explosive was removed. The constant strain she had been under for ten months in London had developed a functional weakness in her heart which nothing but rest and freedom from anxiety could relieve. Had she known that she was under constant espionage from *Downing Street* men, she would probably have died of heart failure. But with the idea of using the girl to obtain future information vital to the safety of England, Lady Nan insisted that she be left unmolested unless caught in some fresh plot against the Empire. As for madame herself, Betty felt a wondering admiration for her *sang froid* and apparent indifference to deadly risk.

## CHAPTER III

### TOUCHING UPON THE HONOR OF ISLAM

OF ALL the varied conglomerations of human activity in London—that melting-pot of all races—there are few more interesting to the casual observer than the seething life of the great docks which line the Thames for more than seven miles, counting eastward from the Tower.

In the blurring atmosphere of a foggy day, the Royal Albert Dock is a maze full of mysterious monsters from which come echoes of strange Eastern tongues guiding the passage of indefinite shapes from unseen depths—up, overhead—and into the cavernous maws of deeper shadows on the quays. In the brightness of an occasional sunny morning it is a riot of color from the orange-red of a rusty "tramp" to the black and buff of the great P. & O. boats. Scarlet turbans, brown faces, black beards, pink caftans, white Hindu drawers, wrappings of manila and palm-leaf, teak logs, baled tobacco. Over all, the spicy tang and smell of the Orient, mixed with soft-coal smoke and odors peculiar to London itself.

Upon the forecastle of a big East India steamer, one morning, half a dozen Hindus were squatting around a bowl of rice—steaming hot, from the galley—pawing out of it handfuls which, for convenience, they transferred to smaller bowls from which they ate. Four were members

of the Lascar crew—shipped in Bombay. The fifth had come aboard at Port Saïd—taking passage in the Oriental steerage for a few rupees. The active man with the black beard and green turban—to whom the others paid marked respect, as one who had made the pilgrimage—had taken his steerage passage from Aden, having gone down the coast of the Red Sea to Mecca on the "te-rain," as he said, over the line of the new Turkish railway.

Both the Hadji and the man from Port Saïd, having paid that which was demanded for their passage to London, were privileged to squat upon their heels all day long—chewing betel, smoking their *chibouks*, listening to the narratives of such as had the gift, partaking of food when it was served out and demeaning themselves as persons of importance—men of wealth who travelled for pleasure. But the obvious incompetence of a Karachi donkey-engine man had called forth such a stream of invective in the vernacular from the Hadji, that the Lascar *muallim* suggested a demonstration of proficiency—the result being that, at the end of the voyage, the Hadji's passage-money was returned to him with a bonus of twenty rupees for services rendered en route. The Port Saïd Turk—having made himself useful in other ways—broke even, getting his passage in lieu of pay. And they were now questioning the Lascars who had been to London before, as to what caravanserai was safest for Oriental travellers—which of them was noted for a minimum of insect life; where the principal mosques were located, the bazaars, the objects of interest; whether it was cheaper to hire a camel for travelling through the country or use the "te-rain," at native rates.

The bare facts set forth by the Lascars as to the fundamental differences between London life and that of the Orient would have branded them as the children of liars had it not been for the incomprehensible wonders already witnessed on their way up the Thames. They told of things so amazing as to be almost unbelievable, in spite of the fact that both the Hadji and his fellow-passenger had been in Bombay and other large cities of the *Angrezi Raj*. To a student of Eastern life the conversation around that rice bowl upon the littered forecastle of the *Shanklin Hall* would have been illuminating.

After much discussion it was decided that the two should accompany the Lascar bo's'n to a house where he was accustomed to lodge, over Bromley way—thereby avoiding the more exhorbitant charges of the sailors' lodging-houses and lower-class hotels in the Dock quarter. When the Hadji and his fellow-traveller appeared in the gangway in their picturesque caftans and white drawers, fastened tightly around their ankles—their personal belongings tied up in cotton cloths of saffron-color and pink—the Muallim objected to his bo's'n leaving the ship. Upon which, the four of them squatted patiently upon the deck and proceeded to argue the matter—the bo's'n swearing by the beard of the Prophet that his intentions were merely to secure accommodations for the holy Hadjis where they would be neither robbed nor eaten alive, and that he would honorably return to his duties aboard ship in the morning. There was no hurry. It was approaching noon, and the 'longshore stevedores were doing most of the work in discharging the cargo; so they chatted and smoked for nearly an hour, at the end of

which the three were permitted to go ashore with passes which got them safely through the Dock gates without serious delay from the military guard.

Getting into a third-class compartment at Central Station, they rode as far as Canning Town, where they changed to the top of a bus going west over the River Lea Bridge into Bromley. Dwellers in the East End of London are accustomed to the sight of picturesque Orientals—every race on the globe, for that matter—so no particular attention was paid to the swarthy Hindus with their bright-colored bundles. Your Hindu is not a chatterer, by nature, when in a strange land. He keeps a tight mouth, an open eye, and a hand which stealthily fondles the haft of a knife under his coat at times—that he may be ready to defend himself upon occasion.

The detached house to which the Lascar took them was owned by a thrifty Bengali who knew the requirements of his countrymen and the profit to be made thereby in a city where the usual manner of living was so entirely foreign to them. A Chinaman would have got more profit out of the same house, because he would have lined each wall to the ceiling with bunks—but his was the only race which might have beaten the Bengali. In the basement he served coffee, *kabobs*, *pilau*—accompanied by a *narghile* from the row which hung upon hooks around the room—at any hour of the day or night, so couldn't very well utilize that space for lodgings. But in each room of the upper floors a raised platform—eighteen inches high and seven feet wide—ran along one side and end, with a mattress of burlap-covered excelsior two inches thick. If they lay fairly close to each other, even the smaller

rooms could thus be made to accommodate half a dozen sleepers at least. And, in justice to the Bengali, it must be admitted that he sprayed insect-powder over each burlap mattress at least once every two months. Of course, each guest usually brought with him a certain number of pensioners which maintained a floating average, so to speak—but from the Oriental viewpoint, the place was fairly comfortable.

After depositing their bundles in a cellar bin provided for that purpose, the Hadji and his friends proceeded to regale themselves with pilau, sweets, and coffee—followed by narghiles and a comfortable period of relaxation upon the basement divan. As it happened, they had the place to themselves for an hour or so. When this was quite apparent, occasional low remarks were tentatively dropped—considered—answered briefly. Such a matter, now as had been mentioned in the Mediterranean—touching upon profit to be had from knowing ones in the great Angrezi city? Aie, there was no mistake! Such a one in Arabia had mentioned a name, and a place. If, now, a True Believer were to find that one and obtain a certain *chit*—so thin that it could be rolled into a ball no bigger than a hazel nut and swallowed, upon occasion—it was said that a hundred rupees might be had for carrying such a matter to a certain other place. Behold, also—there was profit in the knowledge of where certain Turkish armies were, at that time, and how soon they would fall upon the Angrezi in Egypt. Touching upon the tale borne by that one who had come down the Nile to Port Saïd, it was sure that a *jihad* was brewing in the Soudan. Here, also, be knowledge that might be turned to ac-

SIR ABDOOL MOHAMMED KHAN

ENTERING THE MOHAMMEDAN LODGING-HOUSE NEAR THE DOCKS,
IN THE EAST END OF LONDON

count with certain ones who would pay for good tidings in London. Aie! Achmet, the bo's'n, knew well this great and terrible city of the Angrezi, and need not return to the Docks until morning. By night would he take them to a certain place, and be given refreshment for his trouble—even a rupee or so if fortune favored them.

As they smoked, and talked in monosyllables—amplified by expressive shrugs and glances which conveyed fuller meanings without words—a tall Pathan came down the steps from the street. Clapping his hands, he motioned for narghile and sherbet—proceeding to make himself comfortable near them on the rough divan. From his appearance and caste marks he might have been *khansamah* in the house of some wealthy personage; his clothing was of better quality than that of the Hadji. Evidently, he frequented the place because of the coffee served by the Bengali, but a veiled glance or two made them doubt that he was a lodger. He seemed one favored by Allah with money and position among the Angrezi, yet bore himself with the courtesy and humility of a True Believer.

Like the average Oriental in a strange country, the last arrival minded his own business—apparently absorbed in his thoughts. Presently the Hadji ventured a guttural salutation—being a privileged person because of his pilgrimage. The stranger responded with the customary Mohammedan proverb, and permitted himself to be drawn into a somewhat halting discourse upon matters of interest to be observed in the great city of the Angrezi.

The Lascar was for making the most of his time ashore—proposing that they should journey westward

during the afternoon and visit this place or that. This suggestion appealed to the man from Port Saïd, but the Hadji preferred remaining in surroundings more familiar to him until he'd had a little more time to adjust himself—say, until night, when the wonders of the city would be more amazing. Possibly the stranger would play with him a game of chess or pachesi, to pass the time? Aie—it was even so. The man clapped his hands—upon which the Bengali's son fetched a chess-board and placed it upon the divan between them.

The Lascar and the Port Saïd man went out upon a voyage of discovery—leaving the other two playing their game with great deliberation and few words. Again the room was empty save for the two players. A great stove at the farther end kept the temperature above 70° and steam from the mass of wet clothing had condensed upon the two small windows during the forenoon until the panes were opaque. In the rear the Bengali could be heard scolding two of his women.

When the stranger first came into the room he had noticed a loose end of the Hadji's green turban which had been tucked over his left ear; there were, also, a bruise-discoloration upon the second finger of his right hand and a small birthmark upon the side of his neck. When certain that nobody could overhear them, he said—in a very low tone, without perceptibly moving his lips:

"We couldn't be sure as to just what boat you'd catch—but there aren't over thirty of these Oriental lodging-houses within a reasonable distance of the Docks, and we've paid occasional visits to each of them during the last two weeks. There's always a lot of gossip which may

be picked up—so the time was by no means wasted. Now—what do you suggest?"

"H-m-m—the Port Saïd man is a Turco-German spy through whom we can reach a nest of 'em here in London. Have us followed to-night, when we go into the City. On the third day you'd best have us both arrested by an ordinary 'Bobby'—upon some petty charge—and taken before a magistrate. He will discharge the Port Saïd man for lack of evidence, but hold me. At night he will send me west to Scotland Yard in a closed motor-van in which there will be a change of clothing. You can sit in front with the chauffeur. Give me time to change—then speed up until you're sure nobody is following us, set me down at Number 395 Park Street, and dismiss the van. My people in Park Street will recognize me, even with this beard."

Having thus briefly covered every point necessary to a thorough understanding they switched back to Urdu and went on with their chess.

That night the Lascar took his companions—with several changes from the Underground to electric tram and 'bus—to what seemed a semi-respectable boarding-house in Bethnal Green. Among the twenty or more occupants were Russians, Poles, Orientals, Swiss, and West Indians—if one judged them by language and racial appearance. But had a stranger of either nationality applied for room or board, he would not have been admitted without certain passwords and credentials. Had suspicion been aroused as to where he might have obtained them, he never would have left the place alive. For a Turk may easily pass for any Mohammedan Oriental;

a conspiring Soudanese for a West Indian; a Russian, Pole or Swiss, for German or Hungarian.

A certain rug-dealer—Dimitri by name—was the man for whom they inquired. They were left waiting at the door until he came down to them, but after noting certain almost imperceptible peculiarities about their clothing and hearing three names mentioned, he took them to a large room upon an upper floor where other men were drinking beer and discussing certain matters in whispers.

It was daybreak when they returned to the Bengali's —the Lascar going on to his ship in the Royal Albert Dock. Next afternoon, as the Hadji and the Port Saïd man were strolling along one of the East End streets, they were arrested upon the complaint of a tradesman who claimed they had purchased in his shop certain packages of tobacco for which they had paid him but half price, claiming that to be all the stuff was worth. The Hadji had indeed bargained for two boxes of Turkish tobacco and endeavored to beat the tradesman down—after the manner of the East, where standardization of prices is a thing unknown—but to the best of the Port Saïd man's understanding the tradesman had rather unwillingly agreed to the Hadji's valuation. As he'd really had nothing to do with the transaction, the magistrate discharged him, but, at the shopkeeper's request, held the Hadji.

The whole affair was so entirely the sort of thing which the Port Saïd man had seen happen a dozen times in various cities that he had no suspicion of its being a "plant"—and returned next day with the Lascar Muallim of the *Shanklin Hall*, who testified to the Hadji's being a very just and holy man, ignorant of Angrezi

customs. The magistrate informed them that he had been about to dismiss the prisoner with a reprimand when a Scotland Yard officer had detained him on suspicion of being a German spy, and taken him away for examination. If no evidence was found against him, he would be undoubtedly set at liberty and returned to the Bengali's lodging-house within a day or two.

Meanwhile the Hadji had been taken away in a closed motor-van—which, after many twistings to baffle those who might have followed it, set him down at a small dwelling in Park Street. When he emerged from the van, he was in an English morning suit, with a Fedora hat—and carrying a russet-leather Gladstone bag. Inside the house, he proceeded to a dressing room on the second floor with the manner of one thoroughly at home—changed into a suit of better quality, trimmed and brushed his beard to a shape nearer the Van Dyck, and then descended to a rear room, in the wainscoting of which there was a concealed panel giving access to a subterranean tunnel which ran back under the grounds of a handsome Jacobean mansion that faced Park Lane. At the end of the tunnel he ascended a long flight of steps, glanced through a peep-hole, pressed a button which actuated an electric buzzer somewhere, and then touched a spring which swung back a section of bookcasing in a spacious library.

As the casing swung back into place with a slight click, he saw that the room was empty—but he had scarcely walked across it when Lord Trevor of Dartmoor came in from the hall and closed the door behind him.

"Gad, Abdool! I fawncied I heard the buzzer! We'd been fearin' something must have happened! Nan will

be down in a few moments. My word, old chap, I've not seen you lookin' like *that* since the old days in Madras an' Afghanistan! I'll wager you passed for a Mesopotamian with no diffic'lty! Sit down an' give us the story!"

For several years, His Lordship had cultivated the pose of a sport-loving peer with no head for politics—and some of his mannerisms were well-known features of a world-famous personality.

"I will try to avoid the vernacular, O friend of my father's son—for brevity's sake. The situation in Turkey, just now, is about like this: Enver Bey appears to be steadily losing influence. There is a widespread hope of getting back to the Old Turk régime—concluding a peace with Russia and the *Entente* before Turkey becomes completely dismembered. They hope to save Stamboul—and might make almost any concession to do so. Probably that will be out of the question when the peace terms are discussed, but we might concede them Brousa and Smyrna. On the other hand, Germany promises them not only Stamboul but slices of Albania—Serbia—the whole of Georgia. If Germany is able to convince them that she is winning the war, their fears may induce them to go on with the fighting until they are defeated beyond hope of recovery, but if we can manage to exert influence in various quarters *now*, it may result in a coup by which Turkey will be eliminated as an adversary. The feeling against Teutonic rule is strengthening—whether it breaks out in immediate rebellion or not. I've talked with people of every class; they feel that Turkey was drawn into this war against her will and that the final result will be disastrous for her. But the unfortunate

feature of the situation, so far as we are concerned, is the lack of leadership for anything like organized revolution."

"And yet—there *are* men in Turkey who are fully capable of handling anything of the sort at forty-eight hours' notice."

"Prince Suleiman, for example? Hairi Bey? Prince Saïd Halim?"

"Saïd Halim is a prince of Egypt; any Englishman in Cairo would tell you he was the chief instrument of Abbas in trying to stir up an Egyptian *jihad* against us. But I've had a number of confidential talks with Halim; he has a broader knowledge of European politics and more common sense than the majority of his countrymen. For instance, he knows the English have never interfered with the Mohammedan religion—on the contrary, have safeguarded its observance in Egypt, India, and Persia. He knows that his country has enjoyed greater prosperity under our supervision than it ever knew before. On the other hand, he's been getting a daily object-lesson of the autocratic rule Germany will impose upon Islam if she gets control of Turkey. Between two evils, he has the sense to choose the lesser. Neither Abbas nor any other Egyptian prince will ever govern Egypt as advantageously for his own people as we have done, in spite of our mistakes there. Until the Turkish Empire became infested with German secret agents, the Osmanli recognized the fact that it was only British and French influence which permitted their unmolested occupation of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Hairi Bey has been *Minister of Pious Foundations*—a strong believer in the old régime. He is in position to command a very large

following throughout the Empire if he can escape assassination long enough to get a revolution fairly started. As for Prince Suleiman, he is a man fifty-six years old—experienced in political intrigue, fairly popular, a possible heir to the throne—but more valuable for his backing than for leadership. I've in mind two other men you've not mentioned, who might jump into the limelight at a psychological moment. But the great trouble in Turkey, just now, is to know who may be trusted! When you complicate Oriental intrigue with German propaganda, one scarcely dares trust his own eyes or hands.

"If we could only bring about some incident or coup which would galvanize every Mohammedan in the Empire—unite all Mussulmans in one great wave of religious frenzy——?"

"By Jove, Abdool! Do you know, that was exactly what was runnin' through my mind! An' the thing was beginnin' to assume substance! You've been in Stamboul within the month—haven't you? Er—quite so! The city's a perfect inferno of rioting, assassination an' intrigue, of course—mosques in use as hospitals, dead men in every street—women an' children, too. Well, in all that mess, did you get a glimpse of old Mussa Hazikem? was he goin' about in the streets an' mosques?"

"You mean—the Sheik-ul-Islam?"

"That's the man! The supreme head of Mohammedanism in Turkey an' Egypt!"

"Aie! Thou art gifted with the wisdom of *Nag, O Thakur Bahadur!* He has visited all the mosques, ordered special readings of the Koran for the wounded, organized a corps of hospital assistants from the Ulema,

He is personally loved as far as Bassora and Erzeroum. The Germans hate him for the influence which they run up against at every turn—and can't handle. If they dared, they'd have him accidentally killed in the streets, but they've sense enough to know what that would mean to German influence in Turkey. You see, the man stands for practically everything which is opposed to German ideas of system and efficiency. As long as one of the Faithful is regular in his religious observances, the Sheik is quite willing that he should squat himself under a cypress on the bank of the Bosphorus and 'go into the silence' for as long as he damn pleases. That's up to *him*—that's the good old Oriental temperament which the Sheik would like to see preserved for another thousand years. Let the man work when it suits him, according to his needs —and worship Allah as the Koran prescribes. But to the German idea, all that represents an economic waste. Each man should be a cog in the national machine—his actions, work, manner of living, all portioned out by the wiser 'man higher up'—the governing caste. Our 'blood-brother' hath said:

"East is East—and West is West:
And never the twain shall meet.

"What thou hast in mind, then, O Protector of the Poor, is something which concerns this holy man in Stamboul?"

"Aye. If it could be pulled off, it would undoubtedly have a most far-reachin' effect. But—d'ye see—it'll be practically suicide to attempt it! It's *possible*—aye——"

Just then the door opened, and Lady Nan came in—with outstretched hands.

"Abdool—we feared something had happened! Raymond Carter had word from the American Embassy in Stamboul that a certain Mohammedan, whom we knew must be you, had been talking revolution in different parts of the Empire until the Germans were searching for him everywhere—and that they had finally hanged him. That was over a month ago! How did you escape? Where have you been since then?"

"Making my way down the Aleppo-Medina Railway until I could strike across on a camel to Jidda, and a little coaster to Aden—then coming up on the *Shanklin Hall* in the Oriental steerage."

"But why did you waste time doing that, when every hour was valuable and you knew we must be anxious about you?"

"For excellent cause, *O Chota Ranee*. First, there was need of talking revolution in Syria. Then I had word that a *Wilhelmstrasse* man—born in Bagdad and speaking Arabic as his mother tongue—was bringing messages from revolutionists in the Soudan to German spies in London. Also that he would take certain of our plans and secrets back to Berlin when he escaped as he came. I went aboard the *Shanklin Hall* at Aden—he at Port Saïd. He believes me to be of *Wilhelmstrasse* in an even higher capacity. We went to an Oriental lodging-house kept by a Bengali, in Bromley—and, the other night, had a long conference with a nest of German spies in Bethnal Green. Had I abandoned my disguise in Egypt and come up by rail from Marseilles, it would have been practically

impossible to locate that rendezvous. Furthermore, it seems to me advisable that one or two of us should return to Constantinople at once. There is a chance for a diplomatic coup just now which might influence the whole Eastern situation. By going back the way I came, we would be received anywhere in Turkey without suspicion."

A little shiver of apprehension ran through Her Ladyship. "Whom would you suggest to accompany you, Abdool?"

"Whoever is best fitted to do the work! If I can go back with just one man who speaks Arabic and Urdu fluently, with a few Turkish phrases for emergencies—one who, with a little darkening of his skin, might pass for Arab or Mesopotamian Turk—I think the chances are something more than even for work that will eliminate Turkey from the war and open the Dardanelles for supply-ships to Russia. 'Lammerford Sahib' could do it with very little risk of detection—but he is in Petrograd and can't be spared from there."

His Lordship crossed from where he was standing by the big fireplace and sat down on the arm of Lady Nan's chair—drawing her close against him for a moment:

"I fancy it's up to me, Nan," he said. "There *are* a few *Downing Street* men who speak Arabic, but they lack my knowledge of the whole situation an' might get their throats cut inside of a week, not knowin' just where they'd blundered. It's a risk, of course—but you yourself are still impersonating the Condesa de la Montaneta here in London, thick as thieves with agents of *Wilhelmstrasse* every day. I've been dreadin', freq'ntly,

that someone would kill you with cyanide or a knife! There's no sense wastin' our breath in argum'nt—we've our duty to do, like the men in the trenches—and all three of us know it. So we'll just go on with the day's work an' hope to pull through alive, for better times! Abdool, I fawncy we'll get to work more quickly, and avoid a good many of the fleas, if we run down to Beirut on the yacht an' have 'em put us ashore from a dinghy some dark night!"

"Aye, *Huzoor*, but we are then compelled to make explanations to the first men we meet—explanations which may not be accepted. I love the fleas and other creatures of Allah as little as thou, O friend of my youth, because it hath come to pass that I am even as the *Angrezi* in my washings and my cleanliness, now that I have wealth and honors. Yet behold, *Huzoor*—if we go steerage in some little steamer to Piræus, and from there in a Greek boat to one of the smaller Turkish ports, we shall be passed on from one crew to another as men who are what they claim to be—Hadjis, both; for thou also didst go with the Holy Carpet from Cairo, upon occasion. Thou hast touched the veil of the *Kaaba*, and may speak knowingly of the holy *Serai* at Mecca—of matters which be seen there and done."

There was a moment or so of silence, as His Lordship weighed the possibilities.

"H-m-m—your way has its advantages, Abdool. If I can pass successfully as one of the Osmanli, it reduces the danger from German officers and secret agents to a minimum. If I go in from a Greek port as an American, I'll be constantly watched—no question as to that. On the other hand, it'll be diffic'lt to carry out what I've in mind without German uniforms an' make-up.

Still—Freddy Goldthwaite is on the ground. He should be able to find whatever clothes we need——"

"I regret to say Captain Goldthwaite is lying at the bottom of the Bosphorus. He shot a Pasha who was trying to abduct a girl from the American College—got her safely into the American Embassy. Afterward, they caught him—and cut his throat."

"My word! Poor old Freddy! I'm dev'lish sorry to hear that, Abdool! Whom else have we in Stamboul, just now? There's Cramer, I hope? Though we've had no word from him in five weeks! An' Tom Devereux—Leftenant Archer—Sir Harry Bond—eh?"

"I fear that Archer Sahib was killed in Galata during some of the street-rioting. He was disguised, but Devereux recognized his body and buried it. The others were alive and working when I left. Also there were three young attachés from the Embassy who remained in disguise after it was closed. They had shown much ability in the Madrid and Vienna embassies before they were sent to Stamboul. All speak Turkish very well. I think we may count upon what assistance we need. H-m-m—would it not be well for me to present you at that Bethnal Green rendezvous, as a Bulgarian secret agent entrusted with information for the German and Turkish commanders in Constantinople? I gave strict orders that no raid was to be made upon the place until I said so—that we might bag four other men, and a number of plans stolen from us. The crowd, there, will undoubtedly give us memoranda on tissue-paper and messages that will help us materially in Turkey."

"Aye, that's a good suggestion. When we've our plans

all blocked out an' know just where we're to board our steamer, I'll have a hint dropped by *Downing Street* to the milit'ry details watching the outgoing boats—so that we'll be neither detained nor searched."

A fortnight after this conversation, two Syrian Mohammedans went ashore from a Greek felucca at the little seaport of Mersina in Asia Minor—from where they took the railway up to Scutari by way of Adana and Konia. They appeared to be very popular with the Greek captain and his mixed Levantine crew—some of whom accompanied them to the nearest wine shop, where the Mohammedans ordered *mastic* for themselves, thus saving their face as Hadjis in good repute, with a proper reverence for the Koran. By underground rumor—which operates almost as rapidly as wireless—their status, nationality, and loyalty as Turkish subjects were known throughout the little seaport before they had taken their first meal in the *serai*. They wore the customary tarbush with its black silk tassel—but had wrapped green turban-cloth around it, after the manner of those who discard the Arabian burnous for a European coat but cling to a suggestion of the old turban as a matter of religious prejudice. Such men are held in great respect by all True Believers throughout the Turkish Empire; their mere appearance being usually a sufficient passport in any part of the country.

Getting into a caïque at the Scutari railway pier, with their cotton-wrapped bundles of clothing and other personal effects, they were rowed across the mouth of the Bosphorus to the Yeni Kapou, from where, shouldering their bundles, they disappeared in the maze of narrow,

twisting alleys stretching northwest, through the Ak Serai, along the valley formed by the Lycus brook between the main ridge of old Stamboul and the hills of the Silivri Kapou quarter. Most of the rioting and pillaging during the war had been in the European quarter of Pera, north of the Golden Horn. Street brawls and nightly assassinations are common enough in old Stamboul at any time, because the constant intrigue, the network of narrow streets, and the inviolable secrecy preserved about every Turkish dwelling, lend themselves to that sort of thing; but the war had scarcely brought a perceptible increase of them.

Knocking in a peculiar manner upon the door of a small dwelling in an obscure and winding alley, they were received by a bearded Turk, rather shabbily dressed, who gravely bowed them into his *selâmlik*—where he clapped his hands for a girl who brought them coffee and narghiles.

"*Selâm aleykum*, O Hamet Effendi."

"*Aleykum selâm*, O Agha. A-i-e! Thou art the holy Abdullah Hadji who honored my poor house two months ago! And this be thy friend—another holy one! *Sefa gelden!* Are you well, sirs?"

"*Mashallah!* As God wills. We are come a long way, O Hamet—from a far country—that certain matters be laid before thee and others among the Faithful. If so be that thou hast room in thy house for such as we, it may come to pass that we shall remain with thee for a week or more. It hath been a refuge for the persecuted in other times; perchance it may now serve as good a purpose."

"My house is thine, O Hadji Abdulla—and all it contains. Do with it as thou wilt."

Sir Abdool's impersonation of a Turk from a southern

province was, of course, perfect—because he was Afghan-born, and spoke several of the Oriental dialects fluently. But Lord Trevor's appearance of genuineness was a masterpiece of acting. His Turkish was not extensive enough to risk a conversation in that language, but his pronunciation of what he did know was perfect, from his knowledge of Arabic—and his pilgrimage to Mecca, several years before, had taught him little mannerisms —Mohammedan customs—which vouched for him better than any statements that could be made. It may be doubted by the reader whether an Englishman or an American could successfully impersonate an Oriental, among Orientals. But a number of well-known instances establish the fact. Captain Burton—whose translation of the Arabian Nights is the best extant—made the pilgrimage to Mecca without being once suspected. Lord Kitchener, long before the Khartoum campaign, passed among the Soudanese and other natives as one of themselves. Several men connected with the Indian Secret Service and British Foreign Office have gone among the natives time after time without discovery.

After a light meal the two went to another house in the Yeni Kapou quarter, occasionally used as a rendezvous by the English secret agents and—partly through exceptional luck, partly because of the extreme care taken in approaching it—never suspected to be other than the private residence of a wealthy and influential Osmanli. Here they were fortunate enough to find the Honorable Tommy Devereux, Sir Harry Bond, Lieutenant Hedges, and Captain Sir Philip Leicester, in various disguises—the last two having been attachés at the British Embassy

before the war. Without revealing His Lordship's identity, Sir Abdool introduced him as the most famous man in the underwor'd of diplomacy—which they took as a hint that they were at last in the presence of the celebrated Diplomatic Free Lance, whose marvelous coups had been for years the wonder of every chancellery in Europe. This belief was at once apparent in the deference with which they urged him to make use of them in any way he considered advisable.

"Gentlemen, I appreciate this—thoroughly. I'll take you at your word—partly because I want to prove that appreciation, but chiefly from the fact that what I have in mind cannot be carried out with Mohammedan assistance. Even if they believed that no harm was intended, no followers of the Prophet would take the risk of injuring the most holy man in the Moslem world today. Because we're likely enough to be killed in pulling off this bit, I'd hesitate about asking your assistance if you hadn't offered it. But—if we are successful, it may bring about a revolution that will eliminate Turkey as a German ally."

"My word, old chap! That's what we're here for! Let's have a go at it, whether we succeed in pullin' it off or not! What's the idea?"

"We'll get to that, step by step—so you'll have an impression of the machinery and the probable effect. First we must have some house in a secluded quarter of old Stamboul—some house which is occupied by a prominent German officer, but in which there are rooms that he doesn't use. Who knows of such a man—and such a house?"

For a moment there was silence—presently broken by Devereux, with a sharp exclamation:

"By Jove! I know of *one* such place—but I don't see—— Wait a bit—till I describe it! Colonel von Holtzen, who is now one of the Staff in command of the city, was quite thick with old Kara Pasha just before the war started—used him to spread German influence among the 'Young Turk' party. They were chummy for a year or more. Kara had been getting poorer for some time—bought shares on the Paris bourse which proved a total loss. So, for his influence, Von Holtzen lent him money on his house over in the Psamatia quarter until it was mortgaged for more than it was worth—then gave him a good bit more for services rendered. Von Holtzen spent the night with him frequently—used to bring German officers and secret agents there for conferences—made himself quite at home. Just after the first attempt to force the Dardanelles, old Kara went down to the forts on a commissary matter—and was killed by a fragment of shell from one of our ships. Von Holtzen wound up his estate—found the old Pasha had been saving the money advanced him until he had over four thousand pounds, Turkish, in the bank.

"There were three sons in the *harim*. The Colonel paid over the money to them on the supposition that they would look after their own mothers and possibly some of the other women. Then he cleaned 'em all out of the house, which he took over to satisfy his mortgage. Von Holtzen is by way of bein' a woman-hater. At all events, he never trusts one or has her near enough to learn any of his business, so the rooms of the *harim* have been un-

occupied, and the entrance from the *selâmlik* locked, ever since he took over the building. Now—his orderlies, most assuredly, would never enter those rooms unless he told them to, and he seems to have forgotten their existence—doesn't need them——"

"How do you know that, Devereux?"

"I got in through the garden at the back, and prowled about the house for whatever information I could find—went through every room of the *harim*—slept there one night."

"Humph! You were safe enough from Mohammedan intrusion—if the rooms were unoccupied! But you were playing with death every minute! Suppose Von Holtzen had taken a notion to inspect them?"

"Er—quite so. That's all in the game, don't you know. At all events, it occurs to me that since he has lived there, he seems to prefer holding most of his conferences with the milit'ry crowd over in Pera—which frequently leaves the house in charge of an orderly and a couple of old Turkish servants, because his *kavass* and his adjutant usually accompany him."

"Is there any communication between that garden and the *harim?*"

"Aye—the old sleeping room of the eunuch has a door opening directly into the garden—and another into the rear hall of the *harim*. The path from that door to the gate runs just inside the high brick wall between two eight-foot hedges. The house is considerably over a hundred years old; you can imagine what that rear entrance may have been used for, occasionally, with the Psamatia Kapou and the Marmora beach less than six hundred yards away!"

"H-m-m—with any sort of luck, I'd say nothing could better serve our purpose! We'd not have much trouble in forcing the locks of those doors—from the garden?"

"None at all! I fetched the keys along with me—thinking that *harim* might be a fairly good place in which to lie up, in case the Germans or Enver Pasha's men got to combing the city for any of us."

"By Jove! I'm beginning to fancy we may have something better than even chances, after all! You certainly kept your wits about you, Devereux. Very good! Let's get on to the next point! Who knows anything about the usual daily movements of Mussa Hazikem, the Sheik-ul-Islam?"

Sir Harry Bond started to speak—then hesitated.

"Go on, Sir Harry! Tell us anything you can!"

"Why, d'ye see—I know what the old chap has been doin' right along for a month past, but there'll be no sayin' he'll keep it up indefinitely. Parts of Santa Sofia, the Achmet an' the Bajazid mosques, have been turned into hospitals, d'ye see—the *katib* reads the noon prayer to the wounded an' dyin' every day from the *minber*. And at night, when the grease-lamps are lighted, the Sheik himself comes into one or another of the mosques to see how the patients are gettin' along—whether his pet Ulema corps are carryin' out his instructions. Before leavin', he mounts the steps of the *minber* an' repeats a verse of the Koran. Awfully decent old chap, Mussa! An' I have it rather straight that he prays to Allah every noon for the overthrow of the 'Young Turks' and the Germans. He's a bit conservative—Mussa is! Knows

deuced well that if German efficiency ever takes root in Turkey, it'll be good-bye to the Faith—sooner or later. We've been sowin' our bit of trouble for the kaiser, down here, by pointin' out how absolutely the English *Raj* avoids the least meddling with any of the native beliefs in India or Egypt. The Osmanli know that—every blessed one of 'em! An' they're beginnin' to draw comparisons between the two sorts of government.

"However—gettin' back to old Mussa. To-morrow'll be Friday—with the Mohammedan Sunday prayers in all the mosques. I happened to notice they were doin' a lot of sprucin' up at the little Daoud Pasha Mosque, quarter of a mile from here—an' nosed about to see what was up. Seems there's to be a private conference—several big men of the Ulema. Now—say the Sheik is at the Bajazid Mosque between eight an' nine in the evening, when I'm quite sure they expect him? He'll drive from there to Daoud Pasha in his brougham—along the tramway streets to the Rue Hasseki. In this part of the town, there are no electric lights except along some of the main streets. Of course, I can only conjecture what you'll be up to, old chap—but if it's anything in the line of temp'r'ry abduction, as I rather imagine, you'll scarcely have a better opportunity than you'll get to-morrow night. Mussa is so well known, an' considers himself so inviolable, that he never even takes a *kavass* about with him."

"Hmph! Seems as if everything was playing into our hands! But I fancy it's because nobody has ever dreamed of pulling off such a thing—anyone caught in the act of doing it would be literally torn to pieces! Nice prospect, if we happen to slip up! However, I see but one possible

stumbling-block in our attempting it. Abdool—will you give us your opinion, frankly? Is it your belief that if the Sheik-ul-Islam could see how thoroughly it might swing the whole country away from the Germans and 'Young Turks,' he might willingly submit to personal violence and insult—for a few hours? Or, put it another way—to get the proper effect, he must know nothing of the reasons behind it until afterward—if ever. Do you think he would then forgive those who had a hand in it, and bear them no ill will?"

Sir Abdool reflected—his mind ranging over fanaticism in other countries beyond Turkey.

"*Huzoor*, I have spoken to the Sheik-ul-Islam, as a poor Hadji may speak to the supreme head of his faith in this world. And, even so, I have found him courteous to one so far beneath him in holiness and worth. He has great breadth of mind. He sees nothing but disaster for the Faith—for the Padishah—for Turkey—in this war. It is conceivable that, proud man as he is, he would submit to personal indignity—even temporary suffering—if by so doing he could better the condition of all True Believers. As to how he might deal afterward with those who so used him, that would be as Allah decreed. Yet I think he would forgive—knowing what they sought to bring about. The man is too shrewd a *politician* not to see the probable effect of what we may do."

"M-w-e-l-l—that's about my impression of him. Now comes another question: would you, as a True Believer, have any scruples against making this attempt? Would you be willing to assist us? If I'm thinking of committing a sacrilege for which there can be no possible ex-

cuse in Mohammedan eyes, were the true facts known, we'd best not attempt it!"

"Nay, *Huzoor*—I dared let myself dream, even in London, what it was that lay in thy mind. We, of Hind, be not as those who slumber even as they walk about. I will do as you command me. For against the man who knoweth that he intends no evil—who doeth a little evil that great good may come—no evil may be charged. But if we would prove ourselves like *Nag* in our wisdom, we will permit no other follower of the Prophet to know what it is we mean to do—or learn of it afterward. For myself I have lived many years with the *Angrezi*—I see even as they see, upon certain matters."

"Thank you, old chap! That removes the last scruple I had about going into this. There are six of us here—which should be enough for the job. Sir Harry, I'll depend upon you to find out precisely what the Sheik's movements are likely to be to-morrow night. Devereux, here is a memorandum of some things I want smuggled into that *harim* just after dark—an' you're to find out what Von Holtzen will be doing to-morrow! If necessary, we must send a fake telephone message that'll take him out of the house for a couple of hours—but we'll hope he has some conference to attend in Pera. The rest of you gentlemen must get some German uniforms that will fit us; we'll take the measurements now. Particularly, we'll need the long gray-green military capes—with an extra one to wrap about the Sheik.

"Abdool, will you get in touch with the Chief *Hamal*—head of the *Hamal* Guild? Hint to him that some great outrage is likely to be committed by the Germans within

a few days—ask how many men he can get together from his own and the other guilds, at an hour's notice. Unless conditions have changed very much within the past five months, you'll find him even willing to stir up a small revolution if he's sure of reasonable backing. The *hamals* (public porters) and firemen of the various quarters have started most of the street rioting since last August, I'm told. Keep his mind as far away from our real proposition as you can! If he once suspected that, we probably wouldn't live five minutes after we laid hands on the Sheik."

The next morning broke with a flurry of snow and a chilly wind down the Bosphorus from the Black Sea. With the approach of spring, the water in the Sea of Marmora had begun to warm up a little, each noon—consequently, the effect of this cold draught upon it from the north was a fog which settled down upon the surrounding hills and seemed to grow thicker toward night. In the narrow streets of old Stamboul fog is the last straw in the way of confusing the senses of those who attempt to navigate them—particularly at night. And this proved another favoring element in an enterprise which, in cold blood, appeared little short of suicidal.

Various persons had offered to present the Sheik-ul-Islam with a motor car after such things in the line of transportation became practical, but he had steadily refused to accept one. It savored too much of those modern ideas which he felt to be undermining the Moslem faith. So he drove about the city and suburbs in a rather shabby brougham drawn by two excellent horses. In broad day-

light this equipage was recognized by everyone. At night it bore a similarity to other vehicles which made it less easily picked out. In a fog it might have been any one of a hundred broughams. So, to lessen the chance of making a mistake and losing an opportunity which might not occur again for months, Sir Abdool was in the Sultan Bajazid Mosque at seven o'clock—waiting there until the Sheik arrived, about eight.

When his brougham drove away, down the Rue Koska, following the tracks of the electric tramway, Sir Abdool was swinging underneath, hanging on to the axles. Just beyond the little mosque of Mourad Pasha the coachman turned into the narrower Rue Hasseki and Rue Daoud Pasha. After passing the Hasseki Mosque, a shrill cry appeared to come from the pavement under the brougham—startling the coachman so much that he pulled up his horses under the impression that he had run over somebody. Then five ghostly figures came running out of a narrow alley in the fog. While one held the horses' heads, the others pulled the coachman from his box—gagging and binding him. The door of the brougham was wrenched open—the Sheik hauled out unceremoniously upon the pavement, where he was bound and wrapped in a long military cloak which effectually concealed his official robes. Leaving the carriage in the middle of the street, the coachman propped against the wall of a house, the attacking party—afterward identified as German officers—marched away in the fog, down the next twisting alley, with the Sheik between them—a savage whisper in Arabic warning him that the slightest outcry would promptly bring a knife between his ribs.

Mussa Hazikem was a man past middle age who had been unaccustomed to physical exercise for many years. The walk they forced him to take was really less than half a mile—yet so roughly did they urge him on, twisting and turning through a number of dark alleys, that he was completely exhausted when finally they reached a gate in a brick wall. There was a step against which he stumbled, pitching forward upon the stones and receiving an ugly cut, upon his forehead, which bled profusely. He was so nearly "all in" that they carried him the rest of the way—gently enough. When they laid him upon a couch in a cold, damp room which had the appearance of having been a woman's apartment at one time, his senses were so confused that his only clear impression was a whispered threat—that the slightest outcry from him during the next few hours would bring in someone to cut his throat. Unbinding his arms and throwing a number of filthy rugs over him to prevent his freezing to death, they went out of the room, locking the door so quietly that he barely heard the click of the bolt.

Twenty minutes later, as the chief of the Hamal Guild was drinking *mastic* with a number of fellow *hamals* in a low Turkish café near the Yeni Kapou, the Osmanli, Abdullah, who had spoken to him on the previous afternoon, came panting into the place with news which brought every man to his feet with hoarse cries of rage. The holy Mussa Hazikem—the Skeik-ul-Islam—representative on earth of the Prophet himself—had been outrageously attacked by German officers upon the public street, dragged from his own brougham, bound and gagged—hauled off down a filthy alley—to be butchered, in all probability!

The news spread throughout the neighboring quarters of old Stamboul with the rapidity of prairie fire. A momentarily increasing mob of fanatics tore through the streets with Abdullah and the chief *hamal* to the spot where the brougham had been stopped—finding the coachman still propped against the wall. When his bonds had been loosened, he corroborated Abdullah's story in every particular—indicating the near-by alley down which he had heard the footsteps of the officers hurrying away with their holy captive. The mob surged through the alley. At its further end another Osmanli, who proved to be a friend of Abdullah, came running up with the report that he had followed the abductors to the old house of Kara Pasha, now occupied by Mir Alai von Holtzen. He said that with blows and much abuse they had forced the half-fainting Sheik to enter the house—that when the door had closed upon them, there had been the sound of quarreling voices and a horrible gurgling cry, as if someone had been stabbed. That was enough! The mob searched in the foggy darkness for something with which they could batter in the oak door, and presently found a water-logged beam in a neighboring alley.

Meanwhile, as the Sheik partly recovered from the effects of his rough handling, he became conscious of a slight grating noise which appeared to come from the door. Expecting, after what had happened, that he might be assassinated very soon, Mussa's flesh began to creep; then it occurred to him that someone who had witnessed the outrage might have followed, and was attempting at the risk of his life to rescue him. The stealthy actions of the man on the other side of the door seemed to favor this

belief. Presently there was a faint creak of the hinges—he knew the door was being cautiously opened, though he couldn't see it in the pitchy blackness. Then came a whisper:

"Art thou here, O Holy One? Father of the Faithful!"

"Even so, my son—and in grievous plight."

"Deign to take my hand, Holy One—and step as lightly as possible! There be three of us. We saw thee attacked, and followed as quickly as might be—climbing over the garden wall."

"Thou art not Osmanli, my son! Thy tongue hath a roughness like that of the *Ingiliz!*"

"It is even so, O Sheik. I am Captain Leicester of the British Embassy—whom thou mayest have seen there upon occasion. Leftenant Hedges and a good Turkish friend are with me. Come quickly before we are discovered!"

In the garden two other indistinct figures gently grasped the Sheik by his elbows and partly supported him as he walked out of the little gate. A short distance away, they stopped at the house of a prominent Osmanli, who telephoned for a carriage and administered restoratives to Mussa.

As they left Von Holtzen's garden another ghost dragged a struggling sheep into the *harim*, cut its throat, cautiously opened the door communicating with the *selâmlik*, and carrying the sheep in his arms, let fall a trail of bloody drops which led from the street door to the *harim*. In the room where the Sheik had been confined he left a pool of blood upon the divan and floor, then carried the sheep's

carcass out through the garden just as Von Holtzen, with his adjutant and the *kavass*, came home from Pera.

Calling for the orderly and Turkish servant, with no response, Von Holtzen and the *kavass* proceeded to search the lower floor—presently finding them, either drunk or drugged, in one of the smaller rooms. Just then they became conscious of a hoarse murmur in the street. It grew louder—more ominous. In a few moments a mighty blow from a water-logged beam shattered the front door, and a mob of crazed Mohammedans surged into the *selâmlik*, demanding the Sheik-ul-Islam.

Von Holtzen's look of stupefied amazement was reflected upon the faces of his adjutant and the *kavass*, but it carried no conviction. In a moment someone looked down at the floor—saw the trail of bloody drops! With hoarse cries of rage the mob followed it—hesitated a moment before the door of the *harim*, which is, to all Moslems, inviolable: then they smashed it in and fetched lights from the *selâmlik*. On the dusty, half-rotting divan were the Sheik 'srobes of office and his *tarbush*—soaked with blood. The pile of filthy rugs bore mute testimony to the sort of covering with which he had been insulted. And upon a tabouret near the divan was a dirty plate with two rancid ham sandwiches!

That quite settled it! They brought Von Holtzen into the room with his four men and deliberately cut their throats. Afterward they did other things which cannot be described. They didn't burn the house, because fire is too serious á matter in Stamboul—but they wrecked it. And it is likely to stand for another hundred years as the memento of a great outrage committed against the Mo-

hammedan Faith. No Mussulman will enter it. No European will be permitted to lease or occupy it. No man may destroy it and build again upon the site.

A few days later there was a conference at the secret rendezvous in the Yeni Kapou quarter—Sir Abdool and his mysterious friend being about to leave for England by way of Asia Minor. They were congratulating themselves upon the successful way in which their work had been accomplished, and speculating as to its future effect. The still unknown Hadji was inclined to think it would take time to work out.

"The powder is getting warmed up to the exploding point, gentlemen—but no leader has yet appeared. The seed, however, has been sown. It will take time for the story to reach the farther extremes of the Empire; nevertheless it will travel there just as surely, and will lose nothing in the telling. Nor will it be forgotten that two Englishmen from the British Embassy—remaining in Stamboul at the risk of their lives—went out of their way to rescue the Sheik-ul-Islam from what seemed unquestionably a death-trap. The wiping out of Von Holtzen and his people was only an incident. All Turkey will snarl at the suggestion that it was a personal grudge upon his part. They believe now that Mussa's abduction and death had been decided upon as a *coup d'état* with the idea of terrorizing all the conservative element among the Turks. We have scored a coup that will, I think, have far-reaching results—and there was one feature which I consider a masterpiece. The man who thought it out certainly applied the finishing touch! Which of you was it that left those rancid ham sandwiches by Mussa's divan in the

*harim?* Exactly the sort of thing which would occur to the German mind as rations for a prisoner—yet so loaded with possibilities that they were just that much dynamite!"

Devereux grinned: "Why—er—d'ye see—I fancy I may as well claim that as my own little touch, old chap. The Indian Mutiny, don't you know, started with pig's fat on the cartridges. Pig is the limit in uncleanliness to all True Believers."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEUTRALITY OF HOLLAND

WHILE Lord Trevor and Sir Abdool were returning from Constantinople—by devious ways, on frowsy little tramp steamers—Sir Francis Lammerford, after months of valuable and dangerous secret-service work in Petrograd, was on his way home to London for a brief rest. With the friendly assistance of the Secret Police he had left Russia in the character of an American with German ancestry taking the steamer across to Stockholm, then the railway down to Malmö, crossing the Sound to Copenhagen; down through Denmark to Hamburg, Bremen, and Osnabruck—where certain banking houses received him cordially as a supposed connection of their American branch; then over into the Netherlands from where he was to sail on one of the Holland-Amerika liners. His being in The Hague, rather than Rotterdam—from which port his steamer sailed two days later—was accounted for by a visit to the Hague branch of his banking house before he left. In fact, the House of Van Es & Co. wrote their Hamburg and Bremen correspondents that they had received a call from him which they thought might lead to increased American business.

Just here it may be of interest to explain that the Foreign Office of every Government has ramifications in all of the world's capitals which enable it to procure backing

and cre 'entials—often by cable, at a few hours' notice—so that subsequent inquiries meet with satisfactory assurance that a person has every right to claim such a connection. Let us suppose, for example, the British Embassy in Washington transacts different portions of its business through Messrs. Brown Bros. of New York, Messrs. Kuhn, Loeb & Co., and Messrs. Courthier Frères. Although war and politics enter very little into the banking business in a neutral country, Kuhn, Loeb & Co. represent, nationally, the enemies of Brown Brothers. Hence, under present conditions, it would be suicidal for the man in Europe if the British Ambassador even *asked* for any backing through the German firm. But Mr. Hermann Steinberger, the well-known Wall St. broker (who is really Mr. Herbert Stornfield, a secret agent of the British Foreign Office), has an account with Kuhn, Loeb & Co. Having received a request from the British Embassy in Washington, he drops in for a confidential interview with the General Manager of the German banking house—tells him that a fellow German-American is coming into Germany from Sweden with the intention of going to England by way of Rotterdam, thinking he may be able to pick up war secrets which will be immensely valuable to *Wilhelmstrasse*—that, from the probability of there being English spies who might easily spot collusion with an impostor in any German business house, it will be necessary for him to have bona-fide American backing while in Germany. The Manager winks—lights a cigar—

"Enough, my good Herr Steinberger! It iss done efery week! We understand each other perfectly! Der Vaterlandt haf received much valuable information

through such channels. Let us see, now? Der chentleman's name iss——?—your friendt's name iss——? Der Mister Charles Colmar, spelled mit a 'C.' Ja? Very goodt! Mister Charles Colmar iss now upon der books of this company as salesman in our bond department, at present looking into der matter of loans—abroad in Schweden. In a few days, comes der cable from our Hamburg House—do we know him? Undt we at once cable back he iss all right. Ja! Don't mention it, my goodt Herr Steinberger! We must all assist der Vaterlandt!"

Sir Francis knew The Hague from Scheveningen to Oranje Plein with his eyes shut; he could have gone unerringly from the Staatspoor Station to any one of the handsome detached residences in the Willems Park quarter on a snowy winter night if every light in the city were suddenly extinguished. But in his assumed character as an American tourist, he did what the average American tourist would do—asked which was the most expensive hotel in town, knowing but the one synonym for home comforts—and proceeded directly to the Hotel Paulez, opposite the Royal Theatre.

Taking rooms there as the Heer Charles Colmar, of New York, he enjoyed a most excellent dinner, but noticed, while glancing through an English paper, that one of his glasses was cracked. Out of doors, Lammerford's sight was abnormally keen for his fifty-odd years, but to read small print comfortably he required lenses of the second power—unusually large because of the width between his eyes. Sauntering out through the Vijver Berg, after dinner, he strolled into the maze of narrow streets southwest of the Plaats—coming eventually to an oculist's

shop on the ground floor of an old seventeenth-century building with dormer windows in its steeply pitched roof. In the darkness, he failed to notice the name over the door. The place looked clean and businesslike, and the limited display of optical goods in the window seemed to indicate a painstaking craftsman; so he stepped in and looked at various articles in the show-case while the oculist talked with another customer at the further end of it, toward the rear of the shop.

To Lammerford's surprise, he noticed that they were speaking German—not Dutch. A glance at the proprietor gave the impression that he might be Prussian or Saxon from his facial characteristics—not a Nederlander. Then the other customer turned partly toward the door for a moment, and Sir Francis recognized him as Mr. Phaidrig O'Meara—a junior attaché who had been at the British Legation there, for over a year, and who had been reported in *Downing Street* as rather promising diplomatic material. Sir Francis knew, however, what the British Minister and even Sir Edward Wray did not: that Phaidrig O'Meara came of a family with strong Fenian sympathies—was, in fact, a descendant of the famous Smith O'Brien—and had rather expected to find him one of those Irishmen who hoped for British defeat, rather than a loyal supporter in the Empire's hour of need.

The few words of German Sir Francis caught seemed to imply a certain amount of intimacy with this German oculist, but Lammerford was fair enough to admit that O'Meara could very honestly be obtaining information of great value to the Foreign Office by cultivating that sort of acquaintance. If the man was loyal and ambitious for a

diplomatic career, as his superiors thought, his being in that shop under such circumstances was proof both of his trustworthiness and ability. On the other hand, if heredity counted for anything, his presence there constituted a serious menace to England.

It was quite evident that he had not recognized Sir Francis or even suspected him as a former acquaintance. It was evident also to a close observer that the pair of them were nervously irritated by the entrance of a stranger just at that time. The oculist purposely ignored the prospective customer for several minutes—presumably in the hope that he would take offense and go out. Finally, however, he came over to that end of the show-case and inquired with some abruptness what the stranger wanted. Lammerford passed over his glasses. The German glanced at them briefly, tossed them into a velvet-lined drawer, and said: "To-morrow afternoon—four o'clock!" Then he went back to an obviously makeshift talk with O'Meara about—tulips.

Ten minutes after Lammerford went out the oculist stepped to the door and started fastening his shutters for the night. As he was doing so, he glanced up and down the narrow street, then muttered: "All right!" O'Meara, who had remained leaning upon the inner end of the show-case, sauntered back through a rear door which gave access to the house. The oculist then put out the lights in his shop and followed him up to a room on the fourth floor, under the pitched roof.

Half an hour later three men were admitted by the street entrance to the house at one side of the shop, and taken up to the same room. From the conversation

which followed one would have gathered that the well-built, light-bearded man was a secret agent of *Wilhelmstrasse*, and that the two companions who came in with him were German business men of The Hague in good standing among their Dutch neighbors. Schmidt, the oculist, who appeared to be one of the lesser *Wilhelmstrasse* agents, got down to business as soon as the pipes were going and the beer circulating.

"We have been talking of many plans during the last month, gentlemen, but when we came to test them out, each one seemed impracticable—not likely to accomplish what we wish. O'Meara, however, appears to have solved the difficulty. He has been outlining a scheme to me which, in my opinion, cannot fail. We have all agreed that anything producing a definite break with England must automatically compel the Nederlanders to side with *us*. It would place them between two fires, and we now have three hundred thousand men encamped along the border—ready to enter Holland at a moment's notice. It would be impossible for Holland successfully to resist a sea attack from England and a land attack from Germany at the same time—she must side with one or the other. If she breaks with England, that settles it—irrevocably."

The other *Wilhelmstrasse* man had been thoughtfully smoking, but a gleam came into his eyes at this.

"What is O'Meara's plan?" he demanded. "Let's have it!"

"First to compromise the British Minister, here, so unmistakably that every newspaper in the city will do its best to excite popular indignation against him—stir up rioting against England—and then to have Sir Alan

assassinated in such a way as to make it appear that the Dutch Government took no steps to protect him."

"Bah! That's an old game in diplomacy! It was even tried against the Dutch Minister in London, a year ago!"

"And would have succeeded, my friend, had not the plan been discovered and blocked by their *verdammten* Diplomatic Free Lance, of whom one hears such amazing stories. It would have succeeded—don't forget that! The plan is not new, I admit! But tell me, if you please, what plan *is* new in diplomacy? Work out something which you are sure is original in your own massive brain, and the next schoolboy you meet will tell you it was tried in Assyria or Babylonia three thousand years ago! This plan is as old as the human race. And it has been successful in most of the cases where it has been tried!

"But there are features about this scheme of O'Meara's which make it different—more promising. This British Minister has Dutch blood in him. He is a lineal descendant of the Vanden Bempde family—which has made him more than usually *persona grata* with Queen Wilhelmina. When such a man is caught treacherously planning to betray and annex the Netherlands, it will arouse ten times the public indignation that it would if he were not partly Dutch himself! Is it that you comprehend? On the other hand, his assassination, not prevented by this Government, will be doubly exasperating to England after her diplomatic care in trusting her representation to a man who is partly Dutch in sympathy and blood. See the point? As O'Meara has blocked it out, the plan cannot fail! All he asks is one of the Cabinet ministers who can be bribed to assist him."

"Hmph! He doesn't ask *much*, this Irish friend of ours! Bribing a Cabinet minister is a trifling detail, as everyone knows!"

O'Meara grinned at this, and lighted a cigar.

"Faith, if it were easy, we'd not be wastin' our breath upon such a matter *now*—'twould have been done long ago! 'Tis not an easy job to pull off a coup of any sort in diplomacy, but the fact that it's difficult makes it all the more effective when successful. Let us go into this a bit, now, an' see how it looks. We'll take, first, the Foreign Minister—the Jonkheer Loudon; he's by way of being a strong English sympathizer. Jonkheer Cort van der Linden, Minister of the Interior, is equally so. General Bosboom, the Minister of War, is a bit on the other side—has much admiration for the German army and its methods. I've been thinking him over, but I can't see any way to get hold of him without riskin' too much in case he's really loyal to his own country. Captain Rambonnet, the Minister of Marine, is another of the same sort. Doctor Mely, however, I know to be a German sympathizer, and he's in business difficulties on account of the war. The house in which he is a two-thirds owner has met with heavy losses in Belgian investments and accounts; he's been obliged to borrow heavily from banks which are associated with those in Hamburg and Berlin. Can any of you suggest a way of exerting pressure upon him?"

After a moment's silence Rudolph Kirschwasser, a wealthy German merchant of The Hague, spoke up.

"I should put him in the hands of Fräulein Katrina von Kattenberg for a few weeks; she'll get him infatuated

very easily, and will know just where to put on the pressure."

"No! I object to mixing her up with this sort of thing at all! In the first place, I don't think she'd do it; then, before we get through with this, there's the ugly business of assassination to consider. No! Keep her out of it!"

O'Meara spoke with some heat. It had been through his own infatuation for the handsome Viennese, and his frequent visits in the house where she had lived for years with her uncle, that he had been drawn into contact with the German element at The Hague; and he was jealously averse to her being placed in a position where presumably she would have to encourage familiarities from a man of Dr. Mely's attractiveness. The others looked up in astonishment at his outburst, then glanced understandingly at each other.

"Look you, my friend—the Fräulein has lived in The Hague ever since she came to her uncle, a child of three, after her father's death in Vienna. Von Kattenberg has been here so long in business, has been identified with so many national associations, that he is considered to all intents a Nederlander. He is, however, the private banker of Prins Heinrich—and has kept *Wilhelmstrasse* closely in touch with everything that happened here. The Fräulein herself has been trained from childhood to assist him in that sort of thing. More than that—she and her uncle have maintained so entirely a neutral position in this city that they are received by the best Dutch families. A dozen of the young Nederlanders wish to marry her. Mely himself is one of her open admirers—though considerably older. She's the one person who

might involve him with us until it is too late to back out—after which it will be an easy matter for her uncle to obtain a number of Mely's outstanding notes, and put on the screws until he doesn't know which way to turn."

O'Meara was shrewd enough to see the force of all this, and knew that further opposition would only make them distrust him.

"Oh, very well! It's a beastly game to drag a woman into, but if you're so sure of her securing Mely's assistance, I suppose that outweighs my objections. You have a talk with her, Kirschwasser, and explain the whole lay-out. All I want of Mely is to conceal a package of papers, during a certain interview, where he can discover them in a compromising position and show 'em to his colleagues. He'll have nothing whatever to do with the killing—no blood on his hands, or anything of that sort. Even so, I think your bribe will have to be so large that he can't refuse it. Don't try a piffling game with him, or you stand to lose out!"

"You need have no fears upon that score, O'Meara! The kaiser and his Government do nothing by halves. We have already spent a hundred millions in acquiring newspaper shares throughout the United States—and we seldom make the mistake of trying to save a pfennig where doppelkronen are needed."

When Lammerford returned to his hotel, he sat down in the smoking lounge with a cigar, to think over what he really knew against O'Meara—finding, upon analysis, that it amounted to little more than conviction as to the man's political sympathies, judging from what his family

had been in times past. Altogether, Sir Francis was inclined to suspend judgment until he had more definite cause for suspicion.

If he could have gone directly to the British Legation in the Hooge-Westeinde, that night, and had a conference with Sir Alan, he would have done so. But for a man known to German banking-houses as a German-American, to visit openly a British Minister in war time was a little too raw. He managed it next morning by accepting an invitation to motor with a well-known Hollander who was secretly a British agent—meeting Sir Alan as a stranger, when their Dutch mutual friend invited the Minister to return from Scheveningen in their car. During the opportunity thus offered Lammerford obtained considerable up-to-the-minute information as to local conditions at The Hague—and some additional points concerning O'Meara, which set him thinking.

At two o'clock he called at Karl Schmidt's shop to ask whether his glasses would surely be ready when promised. Knowing the man for a Prussian, there had been nothing really unusual in his ill-mannered abruptness of the previous evening—but Lammerford was suspicious of him for all that. He knew that unless the oculist happened to have a lens of that unusual size in stock, it was the better part of a day's work to grind and fit one. Schmidt had said the glasses would be ready by four o'clock—which meant that he might have had to work two or three hours on them before he went to bed. He employed two assistants but, presumably, they had plenty of other work to complete next day. So, calling at *two* o'clock, he couldn't have reasonably complained if told that his glasses would

n't be finished that day at all. Instead of which, Schmidt immediately produced them—with the new lens in place.

Now, the one thing a Continental tradesman will *not* do is deliver a hurry job *before* the hour at which he has promised it—particularly if the customer be an American, with his absurd weakness for haste. Usually the tradesman will make him wait longer in the hope of being able to charge an additional fee for neglecting other work to complete his. But there was no extra charge, and the job was finished two hours ahead of time. When Sir Francis left the shop he was convinced that Schmidt didn't want any stranger in it, after a certain hour that afternoon, who was unaccounted for.

On the spur of the moment, he entered a house on the opposite side of the street and inquired for a furnished room. As it happened, there was a vacant one in front, which he promptly engaged for a week—saying that he would sit down and write some letters before going to the hotel for his luggage. From behind the blinds he watched the oculist's shop until sunset—and was about to give it up when he saw O'Meara coming down the little street ahead of three Germans, one of whom he recognized as a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy of considerable ability.

These men turned in at Schmidt's door a moment after the Irishman had entered. In the time it took Lammerford to get from his room into the street, he knew it was impossible for them to have reached the nearest corner, had they come out of the shop—yet when he walked past it, glancing in through the window, the place was empty save for one of the apprentices. Obviously, Schmidt and the four men were somewhere in the upper part of the

house. After a moment of quick thinking at the next corner Lammerford decided that what he had seen might prove of the utmost seriousness—too much so for O'Meara to handle alone—supposing him to be loyal. If he were not? If the Irishman was a traitor——?

His speculations were interrupted by the appearance of a stylish limousine which spun around the corner, ran smoothly down the block, and stopped before the oculist's shop just long enough to permit a woman, muffled in a dark silk opera-cloak, to hurry in at the narrow doorway which gave access to the upper part of the house. In fact, the car didn't appear to lose headway at all—vanishing around a bend in the narrow street before he could make out its number or other distinguishing marks. He had caught a fleeting glimpse of an indistinct but handsome face inside which seemed hauntingly familiar—but he couldn't place it.

The incident added to Lammerford's conviction that something dangerous was afoot—whether against the Nederlands Government individually or the *Entente* collectively, he couldn't determine. Apart from the Legation attachés—two of whom were detailed in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg—and two secret agents who passed as resident Nederlanders, there was no one available in The Hague for the peculiarly delicate and dangerous service which appeared to be indicated. Inside of ten minutes from the time he left his recently acquired room he came to a decision, and took the two o'clock boat from Rotterdam next day for Harwich, reaching Liverpool Street Station at 11:30 P. M.

A message announcing his arrival having been dis-

patched from Harwich to a fellow American at the Travellers' Club that gentleman (secretly connected with *Downing Street*) casually asked Sir Edward Wray over the telephone whether it would be convenient for him to join Lord and Lady Trevor at a late supper in their Park Lane mansion. Sir Edward was obliged to leave a Duke's box at the opera before the last act in order to make it—but he didn't hesitate on that account. Consequently, when Lammerford reached the house, he found the Trevors, the *Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, and a hot dinner awaiting him.

Although Her Ladyship's mixed Afghan and English household were absolutely dependable, even to the point of risking their lives when necessary, the dinner-talk was confined to casual topics until they went across the hall into the big Jacobean library for coffee and cigars. There, Sir Francis outlined what he had noticed in Karl Schmidt's shop at The Hague—together with what he had picked up from Sir Alan during the motor ride from Scheveningen. Sir Edward was inclined to minimize any probable danger to the *Entente* from such a source—upon the ground that Sir Alan was an exceedingly able diplomat who had his Legation affairs well in hand, and that the resident secret agents were undoubtedly well posted as to everything going on under the surface. But neither His Lordship nor Lady Nan agreed with him.

"The chief point you're overlookin', Ned, is the loyalty of Phaidrig O'Meara! If the man is true to his salt, he'll have that situation well enough in hand to give us ample warnin' before the critical moment—though if it proves as big as Lammy fears, it may easily get beyond

him. Sir Alan's tendency, as we know, is to assume that threatening incidents seldom amount to anything. One hears the cry of 'wolf!' so everlawstin'ly in the Service—with so little comin' of it, half the time—that I fawncy we all get a bit careless, d'ye see. However, there's no gettin' around what Lammy says about Phaidrig O'Meara's family. O'Meara's father was among the Fenians under Colonel O'Niel who crossed Niagara into Canada in May, 1866, killin' a good many Canadians before they were captured. We know that the father, an uncle, an' three cousins, took the celebrated Fenian Oath—but this boy spent several years as apprentice in the counting-room of another uncle in Bombay, goin' from that into the Consular Service an' then into the Diplomatic. As far as his record shows, there is nothing against him—but he pays frequent visits to relatives in Dublin and Limerick, seemin' to be upon the best of terms with 'em. All his family consider a South of Ireland man who is loyal to the British Government a renegade—they don't hesitate to call him one. Now—is it possible that a man with his blood, on excellent terms with his family, can be loyal to the Crown?"

"Faith, if you put it that way, George, I'd say it's not possible! But—my word, man! If he's a traitor at heart—eh? That means he's actually hand in glove with those bally rotters over yon that Lammy's been nosin' out! Actually conspiring with them while he's connected with the British Legation an' having no end of Governm'nt information to give away if he chooses! What?"

"That's precisely what Lammy's afraid of! If he's right—an' I'll wager he is, because I *know* that Fenian breed—there's nobody at The Hague in position to handle

a matter of such gravity. We've but two resident *Downing Street* men there, because we've had more work for the force, elsewhere, than twice the number could do. One of 'em's the merchant who contrived that conference with Sir Alan in his motor car; the other is the editor of *De Haagsche Dagblad*, one of the papers controlled by my syndicate. He knows me as the majority shareholder and general director, but has no suspicion of my diplomatic activities. I'd say, offhand, that he's bright enough to give us mighty valuable assistance—an' my interest in the affair, as a big press-syndicate director, will seem perfectly natural to him."

"You mean to say you're thinking of going over there *yourself*, George! Hmph! I fancy there's not another man in England with your constitution, old chap. You get back two days ago from Constantinople, with Sir Abdool—an' from what you've both hinted, I gather that the risk on your lives wouldn't have been worth a German Treaty during any moment of the time you were in Turkey. What you pulled off there was a miracle, no less! An' now you talk of dippin' into another mess, with scarcely a decent night's rest between!"

"How about 'Lammy'? He's been doin' things in Petrograd for months that make a chap wonder he's alive. When they sent me to Siberia, I fawncied the poor old chap would be shot before my train crossed the Caucasus. He starts home, peaceably, for a much-needed rest—but not by way of Christiania; oh, no, indeed! Has to come down through Hamburg an' Bremen to Holland, just for fear he might miss something. We may jolly well thank our lucky stars that he *did*, I fawncy! What? I say! Why

isn't it a good idea for Nan an' me to run over on the *Ranee* *Sylvia* via the Hoek of Holland, anchor at Rotterdam—an' run up to s'Gravenhage for a short visit to Her Majesty, eh? I used to skate with her occasionally, when she wore short skirts an' pigtails; she's not forgotten it, either! Lady Nan and I have been guests in the Paleis des Könings more than once, d'ye see, an' I rawther fancy our bein' in The Hague just now may assist in maintainin' friendly relations between the two Governm'nts. We'll take a suite at the Paulez until we've made our formal call at the Paleis. Fortunately, the yacht—or rawther *Scout Cruiser S-49*—happens to be coalin' at Gravesend. The telephone connection is laid on as usual—I'll just have 'em put Cap'n Forbes on the wire an' say we'll breakfast aboard at six in the morning, then run directly across. The *Ranee* does thirty-five knots—but we'll say thirty—with an average sea. That'll get us to the Hoek of Holland about noon, an' up to The Hague before two o'clock—just twenty-four hours after 'Lammy' left Rotterdam. I doubt if anything much has happened since he was at the Paulez."

Upon returning to The Hague, it seemed advisable to Lammerford that he should abandon his German-American impersonation, so he shaved off the beard which had been a distinguishing feature of Mr. Charles Colmar. An innocently worded press message from London had prepared Editor Van der Beers for the arrival of his syndicate director; consequently he had a legitimate business excuse for calling upon Lord Trevor at the Hotel Paulez within half an hour after the celebrated peer's arrival. It was also natural enough that Lord and Lady Trevor, accom-

panied by their friend Sir Francis Lammerford, should return with Van der Beers to inspect the recently built, up-to-date home of the paper in the Spui Straat—but the real purpose of the visit would have surprised many an honest Nederlander who read *De Haagsche Dagblad* every morning.

Opening from the editor's private office at the rear of the top floor was a sound-proof director's room where conferences might be held at any hour of the day or night with practically no risk of their being overheard. Connected with the directors' room was a small suite consisting of bedroom and bath—for the private use of the editor or any of his associates whose business at the newspaper office required their presence there during the greater part of the night. In fact, that floor of the building had been planned with an eye to its use by men or women from *Downing Street* when the necessity arose.

When Lord and Lady Trevor went to the *Haagsche Dagblad* offices with Van der Beers and Sir Francis they were shown into the directors' room, where Lammerford described what he had seen at Karl Schmidt's shop and what he suspected—withholding only their doubts as to O'Meara's loyalty. After reflecting a moment, the editor himself expressed this doubt.

"It's a bit rotten, you know, for any one in the Service to question the loyalty of a brother diplomat, but there's one feature in Sir Francis' story which simply can't be overlooked. If O'Meara *should* prove a traitor, his opportunity for gettin' us all into a devil of a mess is altogether too good! I fancied I knew this town like a book—yet I'd never heard anything

against that oculist Schmidt up to this moment. He's German—oh, aye! But he's been in that shop for over twenty years an' hasn't appeared to bother his head over the war, one way or another. He's by way of bein' an expert in his trade—has some of the wealthiest people in town among his regular customers—lives above the shop with his wife and the family of his son, who married the Jufvrouw van Westerveldt. Faith, it looks to me as if whatever German conspirators there may have been in his shop were fetched there by O'Meara as a safe place for a rendezvous! The matter appears serious enough to bear investigation."

"Any suggestions, old chap?"

"Aye—we're rather in luck, as it happens. You noticed the little book-shop next door to Schmidt's, Sir Francis? The proprietor is Jan van Oosten—a Nederlander of very old family, with a lot of pride, who is under obligations to me. I had the luck to save his life and a good bit of money for him—possibly saved his daughter from somethin' worse than robbery at the same time. His sympathies are with the *Entente*, because he has education enough to know that German success would mean the death-blow to Holland. Now, I'd suggest that you drop in at his bookshop in the morning, browse among the old editions until His Lordship happens along—as a stranger to you—an' goes in for the same purpose. Then I'll turn up, go back into the house with Van Oosten, an' tell him who you are. Watch your chance an' slip through the door from the shop, behind a long bookcase—you'll be taken up to his parlor, where you can explain as much as seems necessary. Your Lordship prob'ly won't care to mess in this affair

too deeply, because it will mean unnecessary risk before we're through—but a few hours in Van Oosten's house may be of decided 'news interest.'"

This suggestion of Van der Beers's (who was the Hon. Henry Wyndham in England) was acted upon next morning. When the three men had been taken up to the spotless Dutch parlor by Jan van Oosten and his pretty daughter, the Jufvrouw Geertje, it appeared that Lord Trevor had been known to them by sight and reputation for several years. Geertje, who had a capable business head and managed her father's accounts, was a social favorite among the younger set at The Hague and had been present at functions where His Lordship was guest of honor—partly from his record as a daring aviator, but largely because of his personal charm and great wealth. In fact, her interest was so evident that he found it very flattering, and courteously drew her into a tête-à-tête in one corner while Sir Francis and Van der Beers were discussing the house next door with her father. In the midst of their talk she caught a word or two of the other conversation—listened for a moment, her eyes opening widely in surprise and apprehension—then turned to him for a more complete explanation.

"Is that true, Your Lordship? You really believe the Schmidts are German spies?"

"I fancy there'll be little doubt of it, Mejufvrouw. We're by way of hoping that you and your father will not object to our watching the house for a few days from behind one of your window blinds. With your permission we may even get into the house from one of your dormer

windows in the rear. It may seem to you that we are meddling with what is none of our business, but Sir Francis was formerly connected with the Diplomatic Corps, and since the beginning of the war he's been working to prevent complications among the neutral countries, as far as possible. As a commanding officer in the British Navy, it is my duty to assist him where I can."

For a moment she appeared to be hesitating over something she had in mind.

"Your Lordship! I—something has just occurred to me which I think you should know! Listen, please! My room is on the next to the top floor—under the slope of the roof. I have, up there, one of the old Dutch stoves with tiles outside, and a tiled flue which connects with the chimney. Between the stove and the chimney there is a space of eighteen inches. These houses are more than two hundred years old—I think this one must have been originally connected with the Schmidts', next door, for my chimney appears to have a flue from a fireplace in the corresponding room on their side of the wall. The opening on my side was bricked up, at some time or other, and faced with tiles. I know the bricks can't be very thick, because I frequently hear the sounds of voices from the next house, through my stove. Two nights ago I heard some men talking in that room until long after midnight—I could even catch an occasional word, but had no reason for paying attention to it beyond wishing they would keep still and let me sleep."

"Would you—er—be willing to have us mess up your room by taking out some of those tiles and bricks, Mejufvrouw?"

"That's what I was going to suggest to Your Lordship! Would you—I'm quite sure there will be nobody on that floor in the next house at this time of day—would you care to come up with me and look at the chimney now? Father has a number of house tools—we may be able to pry some of those tiles loose."

Telling her father what she had in mind, Geertje took His Lordship up to her room—it being quite evident, when he saw it, why she didn't care to have the other men invade its privacy all at once. It was as neat and dainty as the boudoir of a bride. While he examined the tiling, evidently very old, judging by the depth of the cracks between, she found a couple of sharp chisels and a miniature crowbar. With these he had no difficulty in prying off a number of the tiles—the mortar and fragments falling upon papers which she had spread underneath. Back of the tiling there was a single thickness of bricks—and by carefully manipulating the little crowbar he succeeded in prying two of them loose with so little noise that it would have been difficult to hear it in the next room. Working patiently for more than an hour, he removed enough of the bricks to permit his crawling through into the space behind them. Flashing a small electric torch about him, he discovered that the chimney must have been originally used as a secret passage between the two houses, for there was a hinged panel six feet beyond the fireplace in the other room. Sending Geertje for the oil-can from her sewing-machine, he lubricated the hinges and the old spring-catch—ascertaining from the exposed mechanism on the passage side just where the secret spring must be in the wainscoting of Schmidt's room. After listening until

quite sure there was nobody on that floor in the other house, he pulled back the catch and pried open the secret panel, then worked it back and forth as he oiled the hinges and lock-mechanism until he could open and close it without a single protesting squeak.

From the appearance of the room on Schmidt's side, he had no doubt whatever that it was used by the conspirators for their secret conferences. Hoping to get a glimpse of them before long, he picked a hole between the bricks at the back of their fireplace and found that he could see practically all who might sit around the big table. Then he rejoined Geertje, helped her to remove all traces of his work, and concealed the opening in her chimney by standing a low Japanese screen in front of it.

After explaining to the others in the parlor just what they had done, and arranging that they should be called by telephone the moment any of the conspirators were noticed going into the oculist's shop, Trevor and his two companions left the house. That night passed without developments—as did several more. At the end of the week Van der Beers received a telephone message at his editorial office that O'Meara was then reading a newspaper in the oculist's shop—evidently awaiting Schmidt's return. Sir Francis happened to be with the editor at the moment, and they soon located His Lordship by telephone.

Inside of fifteen minutes all three of them had entered Jan van Oosten's book-shop, which was open during the earlier part of the evening, and managed to slip back into the house without being noticed—the door being concealed behind a long and high bookcase.

When they were taken up to Jufvrouw Geertje's room,

His Lordship and Lammerford crawled through the hole into the narrow passage behind the fireplace and sat down with their eyes at the little crevices Trevor had made in the fire-bricks. They had been there scarcely five minutes when they saw the oculist enter the room, followed by O'Meara, Kirschwasser, and Stolb, the *Wilhelmstrasse* man.

Sitting down by the table, they waited until Schmidt had produced cigars, pipes, and beer. Then Stolb told them of the Fräulein's progress with the Cabinet Minister. (As it happened, he did not mention either of them by name.) It was her impression, he said, that the Minister was completely infatuated. She anticipated little difficulty in getting him to carry out their plan, and had told Stolb the papers should be in her hands as soon as possible. While he was talking, O'Meara had drawn some documents from an inside pocket—unfolding them on the table.

"I have them all ready for her, Stolb—will hand 'em to her to-night while I'm at the house. But first I'd like your opinion—there may be something I've overlooked. This one is a memorandum of just where every troop and company of the Nederlands army is stationed at this moment—it betrays a knowledge of what he's not supposed to know, upon Sir Alan's part, that will make the Cabinet Ministers open their eyes. Here is a tracing of the War Department map, showing the location and armament of all the recent fortifications—together with the available munitions stored in each. Then comes this letter from Sir Edward Wray, in the Legation cipher, with forged initials which are rather convincin'. Of course, the Intelligence Department of the Nederlands Government

could probably decode it with time and patience, but I've slipped in a pencil memorandum of the translation. The first third of the letter refers to matters under discussion between the two Governments—innocent enough. But following that comes this paragraph:

"'*Concerning our arrangements for the immediate future, we now have five hundred thousand men, equipped for instant departure, where they can be embarked on transports within six hours. The transports are ready—field artillery loaded upon them, with ample munitions. We can have a dozen transports, disguised as cargo-boats under the American and Argentine flags, up the Nieuwe Water and Holland Deep before their real errand is suspected. With the German troops massed along the border and half a million of our troops actually landed in Holland, the Netherlands Government will not resist us. It must join forces with the Entente, and we shall be able to smash the German lines of communication. In the future, of course, we must control Holland, absolutely, and garrison her German border with our own troops. She must become to all intents a part of the Empire.*'

"The letter then goes on to deal with other matters—but when the Dutch Cabinet Ministers read that paragraph, it will be enough! Now—the plan is this: Our man will frame up good reason for a call upon Sir Alan at the British Legation, with two of his colleagues from the Cabinet. If for any reason he leaves the room for a moment, these papers will be dropped by our 'catspaw' under the chair in which he sat. If not, our man will tell his fellow Ministers after they leave the Legation that he saw the papers drop from Sir Alan's pocket and quietly picked them up

with the idea that, in times like these, it might be well to get all the side points on other Governments which might be obtained." (Stolb banged his fist upon the table with an exclamation of delight.)

"And the natural inference is that Sir Alan was interrupted in decoding that cipher letter when the Ministers arrived—stuffed letter and translation hurriedly into his pocket as he went out from his private office to meet them! Capital! Splendid! I didn't see how you were to account for such stupidity as his having anything of that sort upon him during such a conference—but, as you've laid it out, the thing is entirely possible! What happens next?"

"Our man is so indignant that he can't restrain himself when talking at his club with the editor of *De Vaderland*, who is strongly pro-German. That editor at once confers with the editors of two other pro-German papers. In half an hour the story is on the bulletins—an extra edition on the streets. If the story doesn't arouse a dangerous burst of popular fury against Sir Alan I don't know much about the Nederlanders. There will certainly be a rioting mob gathered in front of the Legation, demanding that the Minister come out and show himself. You can't scare Sir Alan, he's not that sort, and he'll have perfect confidence in the ability of the Dutch Government to protect him. He will promptly appear at the door or one of the windows. Stones will be thrown by the mob—injuring him—smashing windows—and a few shots fired. We will attend to that. One of the shots will come from a man who hates England—and never misses. Sir Alan will be killed. The Dutch Government,

with proof in its hands of *Entente* treachery, will admit the German troops and side with them."

After a moment's silence, while the probable effect of the plot sank into their minds, there was a chorus of admiring exclamations. Shortly afterward the conspirators left the house. When the listeners crawled back into Geertje van Oosten's room, their faces were bitten deep with consternation. Briefly, they told the editor and Van Oosten what they had overheard—Lammerford summing up the difficult features in the situation:

"We don't even know which of the Cabinet was referred to as 'our man!' That's something we'll have to find out within a very few hours—also the identity of the woman mentioned as 'the Fräulein,' who is undoubtedly the one I saw in the limousine. We can't go to the Foreign Minister with the story, because we haven't a shred of proof against any of his colleagues at present, and while it seems quite impossible, we're not entirely sure that he isn't the man himself. We can and must warn Sir Alan to receive nobody at present without witnesses—but he'll laugh at the story when he hears it. He's just that sort!"

Van der Beers had been thinking over the various details of the plot and trying to match them with other things he knew.

"I say, you know! The woman must be Katrina von Kattenberg, who keeps house for her uncle, the banker. They've been very circumspect in what they've said or done since the war started, but every German of any prominence who comes to The Hague is entertained at their house. O'Meara has been openly one of her admirers—

calls there almost every evening, when he can find a decent excuse. And I know of at least two Cabinet Ministers who are crazy about her. My word! I'm even rather sure of the man whom she is to use as a cat's paw! Van Kort had a quarrel, recently, with Loudon, the Foreign Minister. They don't speak to each other—take opposite sides in every Cabinet meeting. And Katrina von Kattenberg has been openly siding with Van Kort, who owes his portfolio to Prins Heinrich. Van Kort is, I should say, the only Minister whom it would be possible for her to use in any such way as this!"

"Then I fancy we may take at least one step which appeared dangerous until you explained this. If Van Kort has quarreled with Loudon, the Foreign Minister will at all events listen to what we know and what we suspect. Of course, he'll take no action without more proof—but against an enemy like Van Kort you may wager he'll keep his eyes open, and Trevor can describe the whole plot to Her Majesty so that the Government will be forewarned. H-m-m—Van Kort gets those papers this evening at the Von Kattenberg house; he probably won't be able to arrange with his colleagues to call at the British Legation to-night—and yet, he may! More likely, though, it will be fixed up for to-morrow morning—just about the time Sir Alan will naturally be goin' through his early post from London. Well, we must shadow Van Kort and O'Meara every moment. Harry, you know the minister better than we do, so we'll put him in your charge. Lammy will keep track of O'Meara. And I will ask for an interview with Her Majesty—at once!"

As the others preceded him down the stairs, His Lord-

ship turned back to Geertje van Oosten, who was standing just outside the door of her pretty room.

"Geertje, Her Majesty and England both owe you a debt which it will be difficult to pay, adequately. Had it not been for your tellin' me about the chimney an' helping us to overhear that conference in there, we might have been groping in the dark until it was too late to save the Nederlands from the consequences of this beastly conspiracy. If it is ever in my power to do anything for you, there'll be no need of asking twice."

Some womanly instinct told her this courteous English peer—who had been one of her secretly admired celebrities for years—was an even greater man than he seemed. Some expression in her face revealed her liking for him. He bent his handsome head until her lips touched his and her arms crept around his neck—then he joined the others downstairs. As she glanced at her face in the muslin-framed mirror she knew that kiss would be one of her most cherished memories until she died.

The three men were about to drift out, singly, through the book-shop, when the bell of Van Oosten's private telephone rang insistently in his study, back of the parlor, and that sixth sense possessed by all who play the great game prompted them to wait until he answered it. In a few moments he came out of the study, rather breathlessly.

"Gentlemen—Lady Trevor is now waiting at the Heer Van der Beers' office in the *Haagsche Dagblad* building, and wishes *all* of you to meet her there at once!"

They immediately left the house—one by way of the

shop, and the others by the house-door—joining each other two blocks away, as they hurried down through the Groenmarkt to Spui Straat. Had it not been for this urgent telephone message, they would have separated after leaving Van Oosten's, and might not have been again in touch with each other before morning. At the newspaper building they found Lady Nan calmly looking at her watch in Van der Beers' private office.

"I don't know whether *you've* discovered anything of importance, but *I* have stumbled upon something which looks dangerous—and if we're to block it, we haven't fifteen minutes to lose! I had been having tea with that pretty Jufvrouw Van der Emde at the Paulez, and thought I'd enjoy the walk through the Lange Voorhout in the rain on my way back to the Paleis. About half way across, there was a limousine drawn up by the edge of the promenade, and a man, leaning through the window, was talking to a woman inside. I caught a glimpse of his profile against one of the Park lights, recognizing him as Dr. Mely—the Cabinet Minister. Something about the limousine appeared familiar. I don't know why I thought of such a thing, but I stepped down from the kerb as if crossing the tramway to the sidewalk on the other side—and stopped when I was just behind the car. The Doctor's back was toward me, so he didn't notice any one approaching. I caught the words, 'Your uncle, Herr von Kattenberg'—which identified the woman at once.

"Then I heard her say that she would have certain papers ready for him this evening—that, when she delivered them to him in her boudoir on the second floor, he must not wait until morning but hunt up two of his col-

leagues in the Cabinet and insist upon their accompanying him to the British Legation to-night, to demand a certain explanation from Sir Alan—and that, when there, he would know what to do with the papers. From one or two references she gave I'm quite positive she must have made him believe that the British Minister—though a man of fifty-eight, with a charming family of his own—had grossly insulted her at a moment when she happened to be in his power, and that if this plan of theirs could be carried out, it must ruin Sir Alan.

"Then she kissed him and he walked away so completely hypnotized that he wouldn't have seen me if I had crossed the street directly in front of him. It is raining quite steadily, as you know—I'm sure that no one else was anywhere near that limousine!"

They listened to her story in amazement—fitting it in with what they already knew.

"Are you quite sure, Nan, that the man wasn't Jonkheer van Kort—instead of Dr. Mely? It simply *couldn't* be Mely, you know—unless we're altogether on the wrong track!"

"Oh, I know Dr. Mely by sight as well as I know Harry Wyndham here, and all the rest of the Cabinet, too! It was Mely!"

"Then—my word! What! If your telephone message had reached Van Oosten two minutes later, we should have scattered to different parts of the city—shadowin' Van Kort an' O'Meara! An' the fat would have been in the fire before we knew where we were at! I say! I'll go after Loudon, the Foreign Minister, at once—for a witness! We must figure out some way of gettin' into the Von

Kattenberg house within an hour, an' taking Loudon with us——"

Van der Beers spoke up quickly:

"That's the simplest feature in the whole affair! The Fräulein is giving a dance to-night—from ten till two! The paper was requested to send a representative, of course—which lets me in as a very desirable guest. Loudon and His Lordship would be more than welcome on their own account—in fact, invitations are probably waiting for them at this moment—including Lady Trevor, as a distinguished visitor at the Paleis. Your Ladyship's car is at the door; you and Lord Trevor can run back and dress in twenty minutes, while Sir Francis gets hold of Loudon! Meanwhile, I'll change right here and go on to Von Kattenberg's ahead of you. Afterward Sir Francis can keep track of O'Meara for the remainder of the night! His Lordship and the Foreign Minister will meet me in the men's dressing room."

A little less than an hour later—while Lady Nan was the centre of an admiring group in one of the drawing rooms—His Lordship and the Foreign Minister stepped through a doorway on the second floor which Van der Beers had indicated with a nod, in passing. For the moment it was empty. Hurrying across it, they slipped behind a portière into the Fräulein's bedroom, beyond—taking the precaution of opening a closet door in case they might be obliged to conceal themselves. They had been there scarcely ten minutes when the Fräulein Katrina came into her boudoir with O'Meara—who gave her the papers he had prepared, repeated a few particular instructions, and went out again. At the end of another ten min-

utes Dr. Mely cautiously poked in his head at the door, and entered when she beckoned—closing it softly. Handing him the papers, she emphasized the necessity for action that night.

"I have sure information that Sir Alan will be at the Legation between half-past eleven and twelve o'clock. After showing the papers to your fellow Ministers and leaving them in their possession, will you please go at once to your club, where Belrode of the *Vaderland* will be waiting for you. It will be easy to appear very much excited by what you have discovered, and tell him the facts before you remember that it may be indiscreet. Two other editors are likely to be somewhere near—overhearing enough to make them confer with Jonkheer Belrode. As you see, there is nothing in all this which can possibly injure *you*, my friend—the most that can be said is that you were a trifle indiscreet in dropping too much of it to Belrode. He will have the story on his presses by one in the morning. Oh—you don't know what this means to me! I feel that I shall never recover my self-respect until that man is ruined for life! May I depend upon you? Ja? Then kiss me, and go—quickly!"

It was certainly a lingering caress. Just as he turned to go, the Foreign Minister stepped back upon a loose board in the bedroom, which creaked slightly.

"What's that? Is there any one in there?"

"Inpossible! That is my bedroom!" They tiptoed over to the portière and drew it partly aside. The room seemed empty—but the door of the closet in which her clothes were hanging was slightly ajar. With that subconscious modesty which most women possess, she went

around the foot of the bed, pushed the door shut—and shoved the bolt! Then she left the room—a moment after Dr. Mely.

Inside the closet there were a few explosive remarks as the sound of her footsteps died away. The two men tried to force the bolt from its fastenings but the framing was of solid oak; they couldn't stir it. The Minister began to realize that discovery in such a position meant ruin to his career. Lord Trevor was concerned only with the fact that Dr. Mely was getting out of the house with the papers —and that, once inside the British Legation with his fellow Ministers, the affair would be exceedingly difficult to handle. Suddenly they heard a man's voice speaking to the Fräulein's maid in the boudoir—a voice which they identified as Van der Beers'—asking whether she could find her mistress at once, as Lady Trevor wished to pay her respects before leaving. As the maid went down the hall, he ran into the bedroom and unbolted the door—exclaiming softly:

"Get out of here as quickly as you can! That maid is likely to return at any second! I noticed you didn't come out and was sure you must have been locked in, somewhere!"

In the hall, the Foreign Minister shook Van der Beers' hand with heart-felt meaning.

"I shall not forget that little service, my friend! You may have a Legation for it, if you wish! But I must telephone the Oranje Barracks at once, and have a detail sent out to arrest Dr. Mely before he does any harm with those papers!"

"Your Excellency need have no uneasiness upon that

score! Sir Francis Lammerford was looking out for him as he came down the stairs—and had three men waiting outside in a motor-landaulet. We will find the Doctor, handcuffed, in that landaulet—not more than a block from here—awaiting your further instructions."

At eleven o'clock, Editor Belrode was called to the telephone at his club. A voice he recognized as that of Schmidt, the oculist, nervously gave him totally unexpected instructions.

"Mely was arrested for treason fifteen minutes ago. They put him in a cell in the Oranje Barracks, with a guard sitting outside—where no political influence can get him out! You must kill that story—quick! Get word to the other editors! If a scrap of it appears in print, it will set the police tracing out everyone connected with the affair."

A cautious inquiry by telephone confirmed the report of Mely's arrest. Not in the least knowing where he was at, Belrode set about killing the story—which had been in type for three days, waiting for the word to release it. At a conference in Van der Beers' office, shortly after midnight, the Foreign Minister announced his intention of arresting all the conspirators before morning—but Lord Trevor put the affair in a light he had not considered.

"I say, old chap—you arrest the Fräulein and her uncle, for example? Suppose she calmly admits giving those papers to Mely an' says *she herself* took them from Sir Alan's pocket? Eh? Gave them to Mely to place before the Cabinet! Suppose those pro-German newspapers come out with the whole story, rearranged on that basis, a few hours after the arrest? Of course, they won't have the documents to back it up, and your being a witness of what

actually occurred will carry a good deal of weight—but it's a story that neither my Governm'nt nor yours can afford to have made public, just now! It's too much like a match in a powder-magazine! What you *can* do, is quietly hint to the Fräulein and her uncle that it may be just as well to sell their house, close out his business interests, and leave the country inside of three days. Kirschwasser also. That'll 'keep 'em guessing,' as the Americans say—they'll not know how much proof you have against them or whether you really mean to have them shot if they don't take the hint. I fancy they'll go—without a word. Mely, of course, your Cabinet will deal with as severely as you like. You've proof enough to give *him* the limit—but it will be safer to let it happen 'way off somewhere—say in Batavia. As for O'Meara, we'll attend to him ourselves."

When the Minister had left them, Van der Beers asked:

"Would Your Lordship mind telling me why you oiled the mechanism of that secret panel in Schmidt's house so carefully? Did you anticipate concealing a force of men in there to arrest the whole crowd? Seems to me you'd make a corking good diplomat yourself, sir!"

"My word, no! That would have been showin' our hand much too clearly, an' would have marked the Van Oostens for trouble! I told our friend who has just left us that it would be a good policy not to interfere with Schmidt for the present, or even let him know he's under suspicion. If *Wilhelmstrasse* gets an impression that he escaped all implication in this affair, they're quite sure to use him an' his house again, very soon, d'ye see? It's even quite possible they may kidnap Sir Alan or some of the Dutch Cab-

inet, an' conceal them in that old building. In that case, don't you know, we've a means of gettin' in without their knowledge an' havin' the game in our own hands."

The affair ended as it had begun—with O'Meara. He expected arrest upon the charge of complicity with Dr. Mely, but, apparently, there was no suspicion of his connection with the affair. After a few nerve-racking days he learned with astonishment that the Von Kattenbergs were selling their handsome residence and going back to Germany. As he had avoided the house in the fear of compromising them, he knew of no reason for this sudden move—and finally called there in the evening for an explanation. To his amazement, the butler took his card in a contemptuous manner which made him exceedingly angry—but he was stunned when the man came back with the message that Fräulein von Kattenberg was not at home to men who betrayed their own country.

As he walked slowly away from the house where he had been for so many months an apparently welcome guest, he gradually sensed the fact that he had been merely used as an unscrupulous tool to further the underhand diplomacy of *Wilhelmstrasse*—and that the conspirators felt for him nothing but contempt while taking advantage of the secrets he betrayed to them.

It seemed as if rumor had been everywhere blackening his name, even among the Nederlanders. When he dropped in at his club, every former acquaintance cut him dead—unmistakably. Even at a little restaurant where he was known, in the Spui Straat, the waitress served him in stony silence, and the cashier treated him as a stranger.

During the day, it had seemed to him that his fellow attachés at the Legation spoke rather abruptly upon several occasions, but he noticed nothing else unusual until he returned, about midnight. No one appeared to see him as he came in and went up to his room.

He had been sitting there in the dark for half an hour—facing what he now realized to be the utter ruin of his career, if nothing worse—when the door opened and Sir Alan entered, followed by Lord Trevor and Sir Francis Lammerford. They locked the door, turned on the lights, and seated themselves. He noticed, subconsciously, that none of them cared to smoke. Presently Sir Francis Lammerford remarked in a reflective way:

"There's a difference, you know, between a man who is an open rebel against the Governm'nt—riskin' his life in a fair fight—and the sort of creature who cuts its throat in the dark while pretendin' to be its loyal servant. The Fenians gave us a good bit of trouble, back in the fifties and sixties—but they were men who fancied they had a grievance against England, an' were not afraid to risk their lives by showin' it. Even to-day, the Irish who still profess to hate England are quite open about it. In the Orient, you know, one searches rather far before he finds a man who'll actually betray his salt. O'Meara, if we send you back to the Tower, it's a hanging matter, as you must be aware—an' the whole story will have to be known. It will blacken your family name for generations. On the other hand, if you happen to die here at The Hague, while presumably on duty in the Legation—why, there's nothing more to be said. The people here know vaguely that you betrayed your country, but they don't know the story in

detail. If you die, you're where you can do no further mischief—and the situation in Holland under present conditions is too delicate to risk dangerous complications by allowing the facts of this affair to leak out."

The man's throat was horribly dry. He kept moistening his lips with the tip of his tongue—looking from their stern faces to the window and back again—realizing that, incredible as it seemed, he was going to die—very soon. He had determined while sitting there in the dark that he would go to America, where nobody knew him—where he would be received as if nothing had happened. But he had forgotten what sort of men these were whom he had betrayed. He would never see America. He would never see another sunrise. For a moment, he thought, wildly, of begging for at least that privilege; then some remnant of the courage which had been that of his Fenian ancestors made him straighten up in his chair.

"You—you have some particular way in mind—Sir Francis?" he asked.

Lammerford took a small capsule from his pocket and soberly handed it to the doomed man.

"It's a matter of scarcely three seconds—after the gelatine dissolves. Er—cyanide, you know."

O'Meara put the capsule between his lips and managed to swallow it. For a moment he sat there looking at them while the horror deepened in his eyes. Then there was a convulsive shudder. The body sagged down in the chair.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GREATER PLOT

IN THE Rue Vignon, up back of the Madeleine, a small wrought-iron sign projects over the narrow entrance of a restaurant which has become famous during the last few years—particularly since the beginning of the war. The quaint old French letters inform passers-by that it is the *Café des Trois Gascons*—the name having come down from a small hostelry in the fields outside the walls of Old Paris in the fifteenth century. Inside, after one has gone some twenty paces and passed the cage where the stout proprietress sits, the passage opens into a large room with a mezzanine balcony, lighted during the day by a skylight over the centre. Today the place is a popular rendezvous for officers on weekly furlough from the trenches—and for war correspondents, Government officials, and the sprinkling of outside civilians who are permitted by the police to remain in Paris for legitimate purposes.

The waiters, who formerly knew and were known to most of the patrons, are in shallow graves back of the firing line or in the trenches around Verdun killing their daily quota of *boches*. Their places are filled in the *Café des Trois Gascons* by girls in short black skirts, white aprons and caps—girls between eighteen and twenty-five, who possess the wit to be entertaining, as they serve, and do

not underestimate the responsibility which rests upon every woman of France to provide the nation with its soldiers of the future.

At a corner table, one evening, were four officers who had come down from the front on a week's furlough—three of them Irish and the other a Gordon Highlander. They were in high spirits—making the most of their brief respite from the soul-deadening trench-life. They joked with Marie, their waitress, exchanged anecdotes of various engagements, and discussed the entertainments to be seen in Paris, with the absorbing interest of men who do not know whether to-night's comedy or opera may be their last. Presently two more Irish officers came in with three ladies and a well-known member of the Chamber—seating themselves at a near-by table and bowing to the group in the corner as Marie came in from the kitchen with a pâté and four "bocks."

For a moment or two she stood by the corner table, easily holding her own in the duel of repartee; then she moved on to take the order of a couple who had just entered the room. Subconsciously, however, she was noticing a subtle change in the talk among the Irish officers. As soon as she left them the voices of at least two dropped to a more confidential tone; they appeared to be discussing something which they preferred not having overheard.

For one memorable year Marie had lived in London, as the assistant of a Bond Street modiste, and had picked up enough English to follow any ordinary conversation. By occasional words that reached her from the table in the corner she sensed the fact that the officers were referring to

some undertaking in which a number of their fellow countrymen were interested—some approaching day upon which certain plans would be carried out with the coöperation of all.

There was nothing said which indicated a treasonable element in whatever it was they were planning; in fact, it was far more likely to be some preliminary concentration for a summer offensive against the German lines. After some consideration she decided that what little she had overheard could have no other application, and almost forgot the intensely patriotic incentive which prompted her to listen so closely—almost, but not entirely. After a while, passing the table of the Deputy, Henri Couramont, she noticed that he was talking in much the same confidential manner to one of the officers at his table—which also bore out the supposition of an impending army campaign.

When Couramont and his party left the *Café des Trois Gascons*, the group of Irish officers were not long after them. All appeared to be well known—the occasional gendarmes saluting when their faces were recognized. Three hours later Deputy Couramont came walking along through the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli with Captain Tim Delaney, who had followed him from the café. As they reached the Rue Castiglione, the light from an arc-lamp shone down upon their faces with a bluish-green reflection that distinctly revealed every line and feature to a tall man in evening clothes who was coming down the other arcade from the Place Vendôme. At first he noticed them in merely a casual way as they stopped for a second or two before crossing to the Hotel Continental; then a fleeting expression upon the Deputy's face held his attention suffi-

ciently to make him study the man closely. He recognized both of them in the second glance, but the expression he had caught reminded him of someone who was *not* Couramont, some man whom he couldn't remember to have seen for years, a person whose name and identity escaped him, spur his memory as he might.

His mind was still occupied with the evasive resemblance when he dropped in at the *Café Sylvain* and found there Gaston de Marais, of the *Corps Diplomatique*. In the years preceding the war De Marais and Sir Francis Lammerford had been diplomatic adversaries, but each respected the other's ability, and their interests were now identical, at least until the final readjustment of European boundary lines. As Sir Francis had been in Russia for several months—had been twice reported dead—the Frenchman was genuinely pleased to see him.

"My dear friend! Is it really thou? Come! This is a happy meeting! We will exchange experiences—with champagne to stimulate the memory—eh?"

For a while they chatted of various campaigns and the political undercurrents which, more than the taking or losing of trenches, moved the warring nations this way and that toward the final showdown upon which a return to peaceful life would be possible. After a while, Lammerford casually mentioned having seen the Deputy, Henri Couramont.

"The man appears to be gaining in political strength if I'm a judge of stray gossip and the manner of people toward him."

"Ah—*oui!* Couramont's leaders in the *Courier du Matin* have been most daring; he has fought seven duels

in consequence. He is a man to be reckoned with, and the Cabinet are well aware of the fact—they even mentioned him for the *Postes et Télégraphes* portfolio."

"Let's see: he was from the *Côte d'Or*, wasn't he—originally?"

"I thought it was *Haute-Sâone*—pretty well over toward the Rhine valley, at that. Was he not running a small weekly sheet at Belfort before he came to Paris—eighteen years ago? It is said he gets his extreme hatred of the *boche* from having lived within a stone's throw of him so long."

"Seems pretty thick with the English and Irish officers!"

"Ah! That makes itself to be understood, my friend. Officers are not permitted to say too much, you know—but one may smile, affirmatively, when another makes a tentative statement which is known to be true. One hears that much of Couramont's accurate information concerning matters at the front comes from his frequent *déjeuners* with people of that sort. And, besides, one hears that his mother was the daughter of an Irish baronet, which makes the accounting for his excellent English—as his early years on the German border gave him German which is practically without accent."

Lammerford's mind was flashing from one half-remembered face to another—groping, considering, fitting together the various points in this gossip concerning the Deputy and trying to construct inferences that would prove up.

"There's no question as to his patriotism, I suppose? No chance of his having imbibed Prussian ideas from having lived so long in close touch with them?"

"Pouf! You should hear him speak of the *boche*, my friend! He spent a day last month in the trenches at Verdun—and sat in a puddle of water for hours, potting at every German head he could see! One hears that he got two of them—the man is an artist with rifle or pistol!"

"Hmph! From what you say, De Marais, he appears to be one of those tried and proved individuals to whom no possible suspicion can attach? Eh?"

"It makes itself obvious that one's actions influence the opinions of others more than the spoken word! The man has given proof, at the risk of his life—and more than once! Is it that you have something in mind concerning this Couramont, *mon ami?*"

"No, there's nothing upon which I could base a fragment of suspicion against him. Only—when you mentioned his early years upon the German border, I thought of the many instances which show the extent to which a Prussian will risk his life, unhesitatingly, if, at some crucial moment, he may find himself in position to do the one vitally important thing for his Government—the one thing impossible were he known to be German. With Couramont, as you say, one has proofs enough as to where his sympathies lie—and he's half English, or Irish, so that removes even the possibility of any German taint in his blood, *n'est ce pas?* Well"—yawning slightly—"I've had but six hours' sleep in two days. I shall have to make some of it up. You must tell me where I may find you most frequently—I may be in Paris for a week or so."

Several years before, Sir George Trevor had maintained by the year a four-room apartment in the Faubourg St.

Honoré which, upon his elevation to the British Peerage, he had turned over to Sir Francis Lammerford—the place being looked after, in his absence, by a very attractive widow of thirty-five who, after laying by a comfortable *dot*, was shrewd enough to retain her personal liberty and add to her fortune by acting as concierge for the five buildings owned by M. Chartrain, the modiste of the Rue de la Paix. Although just over fifty, her English tenant—whose graying temples only accented the freshness of his complexion and physical activity—could have married her for the asking. But—as she was sensible enough to realize—he might as easily have had more than one titled beauty in London had he cared for settled family life. Which explains the sort of care given his belongings in Paris during his absence, and the personal attention which enveloped him with a peculiarly comfortable warmth when he was in residence at the little apartment in the Faubourg St. Honoré. Returning to it after his chat with De Marais he found Mme. Fauvette, in a dainty négligée, arranging upon one of the smaller tables a silver tray with fruit, little cakes, and wine glasses—while, just underneath, stood a cooler in which two quarts of dry champagne were packed in ice.

"*M'sieu' le Chevalier* has been away from Paris a long time, and has doubtless been travelling constantly; he will be *très fatigué* after his journey! Me, I do not know of his arrival until I ascend, *à dix heures*, to close the window—and behold the portmanteau of *M'sieu'!* So—*voila!* One makes the little celebration, obviously!" Embracing her with a friendly warmth which belied his years and brought the hot blood to her cheeks, he mo-

tioned her to the cushion-piled divan in one corner while he rummaged in a closet for the Dimitrino cigarettes.

"Ah! It is like coming home, Julie! And you begin by spoiling me, as usual! Me, I am just from the *Sylvain*, so the cakes must wait until I have the appetite, but the champagne we'll have while you tell me about yourself since I left. Not married yet? Well, for that, the Saints be praised! When you provide another husband for yourself, I must change my *pied-à-terre*."

Had her warm heart been too unruly for her cool Parisian brain—which had ever an eye to material advancement—Madame Julie Fauvette might easily have made for herself a most excellent match. She was in her prime rather better than good-looking—with the education many a Parisienne obtains through careful perusal of first-class weekly and monthly periodicals, and a habit of close observation which gave her a shrewd knowledge of human nature—a fund of information concerning those in the public eye which Lammerford had found exceedingly valuable upon more than one occasion. With a skill of which she was probably unconscious, he gave the conversation a slant toward Government people—leading her around to what might have been called an "appreciation" of the Deputy, Henri Couramont, whose political ability she frankly admitted but whose influence in the Chamber had appeared to have, sometimes, an ulterior motive which she couldn't puzzle out. Wishing to emphasize some peculiar quality, which she felt without being able to describe, she descended to her own quarters for a recent copy of *Le Monde Illustré* which contained an excellent half-tone print of the man.

After they had discussed it for a while, she looked around the apartment to make sure that everything had been provided for his comfort—then left him. Getting into pajamas and lighting a cigar, Lammerford went back to his reading table for another glance at Couramont's portrait in the magazine. It was an excellent one—reproduced from a recent photograph—depicting the well-known editor and politician as he appeared on the street. The pointed beard was of sparse growth, revealing the lines of jaw and chin—the features, line for line, as he had seen them earlier in the evening. But the hauntingly familiar expression—due, possibly, to the bluish-green light from the arc-lamp—was lacking.

In the opinion of the British Foreign Office, Lammerford's memory for names, past occurrences, and the faces of people met but once or twice was almost as marvelous as that of Il Cavaliere Scarpia—the old Italian eagle of diplomacy. It was really a product of painstaking system by which he recorded, mentally, such impressions as he wished to retain for future use—and it was frequently strengthened by inducing mental stimulation of subconscious impressions which had seemed of no importance at the time. One of his methods for producing a species of hypnosis in which his brain clarified and reproduced long-forgotten incidents was the listening to classic music while in a condition of complete relaxation. In the manor house of his Cornwall estate—in both his Paris and London apartments—he had American phonographs of the latest, most perfect type, with a collection which included hundreds of the best orchestra records. After a final study of the Deputy's face he turned out the lights, placed the

"Scala" record of the Tristan and Isolde prelude in the machine, then stretched himself in the Morris chair with his cigar. For an hour he played one record after another in the dark—but the forgotten resemblance obstinately remained just beyond his mental vision. He gained this much, however, as a result of his concentration—an idea as to how he might obtain some definite clue by purely mechanical means.

In his talks with De Marais and Julie Fauvette, the fact seemed to have been established that Couramont had come to Paris, as a permanent resident, just eighteen years before. Certain occurrences mentioned by each fixed the time without much question. So that, if the man had been elsewhere publicly active, it would have been prior to that time—say nineteen or twenty years before. In the days when illustrated periodicals depended entirely upon wood-engraving, portrait wood-cuts were usually so composite in their printed effect that establishing a person's identity by means of one would have been gross injustice to the individual. But between 1888 and 1892 photo-engraving was perfected to such an extent that the prints became reliable. A portrait "half-tone" in a magazine of 1894-5, for example, would accurately represent the man as he then looked. This was good theory as far as it went—it pointed the direction in which research might prove successful—but to make a thorough investigation along those lines bulked as another "labor of Hercules." However, there are short cuts in the working out of every theory.

Sir Francis knew that Couramont's early life was a matter of little or no interest to him if it had been passed

in France. If, however, it should prove to have been spent in Germany or Austria? Ah! Here was the short cut in his theoretic reasoning. If a man achieves prominence in any German city, it's a foregone conclusion that he will spend more or less time in Berlin. If his personality stands out from the mass in Berlin, even for a brief period, it is morally certain that one of the great illustrated weeklies will reproduce his first obtainable photograph. And the greatest of these in size and popularity is the *Illustrirte Zeitung*.

At ten in the morning, after a *déjeuner* prepared by Madame Fauvette herself, Lammerford walked down to the old Palais Mazarin and made out a "bulletin" of the volumes he wanted in the Bibliothèque Nationale. He had taken with him the copy of *Le Monde Illustré* in which Couramont's portrait appeared, entering it on his "bulletin" as personal property which he might afterward carry out of the building. For over an hour he rapidly turned page after page of the big volumes, dismissing each portrait "half-tone" with a single glance as he passed it. Then—in the fifth volume—his hand paused. At the head of a paragraph recording a scandal which had been the talk of Berlin society for a week or more, was the picture of a young captain in one of the uhlan regiments. Hauptman Heinrich Schmaltz had, by his good manners and soldierly appearance, attracted the attention of the imperial family—being given a very desirable command at the *Schloss*. After a few months he was frequently seen with a handsome Viennese countess who had been five years married but detested her husband. The count heard rumors and came to Berlin; there was a duel in

which the count was killed. Captain Schmaltz was sent to America on a mission promptly arranged with *Wilhelmstrasse*, and the countess disappeared at the same time. The incident and the gossip came back to Lammerford as he read the paragraph. So far as he knew Berlin never heard of the young captain again. Yet the expression he had noticed upon Couramont's face *had been identical with the one caught in a glimpse of Captain Schmaltz as he stood under one of the arched entrances of the Schloss in Berlin, nineteen years before*—with the light from one of the park lamps falling upon his head and sharply outlining it against the deep shadow under the arch behind him.

Lammerford placed the two "half-tones" side by side. That of the young captain showed merely a small moustache, while the Deputy wore a thin Van Dyke—but the lines of the face, the prominent chin and forehead, the eyes, the whole expression, were unmistakable. The popular leader of the French Chamber—supposed bitterly to detest everything German—was, in fact, Heinrich Schmaltz—formerly captain in a Berlin regiment of uhlans, and in the service of *Wilhelmstrasse* at the time he disappeared. For perhaps the thousandth time Sir Francis knew that his sense of intuition had been vindicated—that what seemed an absurdly groundless suspicion had been stimulated by that inner consciousness of his which automatically recorded impressions and stored them up for future use. Making a memorandum of the volume and page numbers in the big German weekly, he left the library, and went back to his apartment with Madame Julie's *Monde Illustré*.

To suppose that Schmaltz, or Couramont, had reached his present standing in the political world of Paris with any real hatred of the *boche* such as he professed, was manifestly absurd. On the other hand, it seemed equally so to assume that *Wilhelmstrasse* had sent him into France nineteen years before with the object of working up to such a position against some unforeseen emergency where it would be of immense strategic value to the German War Staff. And yet—proof is piling up that Germany has been doing exactly that for the past quarter-century with the one great object in mind—*world domination*—a crushing out of other Governments by relentless system and overpowering force.

In the afternoon Sir Francis went down to the Ile de la Cité and called upon his old acquaintance, Lépine, at the Préfecture. Without implying that he was interested in one more than others he asked for brief résumés of the careers of certain French politicians—including the Cabinet ministers, two Senators and three Deputies. Knowing Lammerford to be associated with the British Foreign Office, it was—to Monsieur Lépine—a perfectly natural inquiry. Since the conference of the Allies, at which it was agreed that they should act in concert during the remainder of the war, each of the chancelleries had been vitally interested in the membership of the other Governments. A rather unusual harmony prevailed—but, under the surface, there was necessarily a close observation of opinions and actions among Government officials, everywhere, in order that anything which seemed to threaten this harmony might be promptly dealt with.

With the vast amount of minute information at his

disposal, Lépine was able to give an accurate account of what each man's private life had been, as well as that recorded in the daily prints. If anything, Lammerford seemed less interested in Henri Couramont's biography than in those of more prominent men—the Prefect couldn't decide whether his friend's request had been actually what it appeared on the surface, or not. But Sir Francis left the Boulevard du Palais with data concerning the Deputy which gave him more than one clue as to where he might look for evidence of nefarious activities. For one thing, he learned that Mlle. Obregon, of the *Folies Bergére*—said to be Couramont's *bien aimée*—was an intimate friend of Mrs. Boyle Fitzpatrick, wife of a captain in one of the Irish regiments, and that the four dined frequently with other officers and their wives at the *Café des Trois Gascons* in the Rue Vignon.

Lammerford had taken a table at the *Trois Gascons* and was finishing his soup when they arrived that evening. While studying the party in casual glances he was conscious that his pretty waitress looked at him rather intently as she brought in his meat course. The only other diners in their vicinity were a group of Irish officers—too much occupied with their own conversation to overhear anything said in guarded tones. After glancing at them to estimate how far her voice might carry, she leaned over the handsome Englishman, arranging his dishes.

"M'sieu' does not, then, remember me? Behold—' I am that Marie Latour whom *les bêtes apaches* were dragging up the Rue Pierre Sarazin from the *Boul' Mich'* one night, three years ago—when *le bon M'sieu' anglais* knocked them down, and shot the one who drew a knife!"

"*Ma foi !* One has the great pleasure in seeing thee again, *ma fille !* In the darkness of little streets it makes itself very difficult to see a face distinctly. One remembers we had a 'bock' in one of the *Boul' Mich'* cafés, to restore thy *nerfs*, and that one accompanied thee to thy apartment, for safety, afterward. My affairs made it necessary that I should depart from Paris next morning, so I had but the little souvenir of cerise ribbon to remind me of the adventure. You have now a husband—*oui ?*"

"*Ah, non—m'sieu'!* For two months only! He was killed at the Marne. For a year, before, I was in your big foggy London—where one acquires the *anglais* with much labor; then I returned, before the war. M'sieu' is perhaps of the *Corps Diplomatique ?*"

"And why think you that *ma belle ?*"

"Because one observes that M'sieu' came out of the Préfecture this afternoon, and spoke to M'sieu' de Marais on the Pont Neuf. M'sieu' has the bearing of *un soldat;* yet he is never in uniform. One observes little things in a place like this, concerning which it is desirable to speak with someone who is of the Government. *Oui ?*"

Lammerford was apparently paying more attention to his dinner than to the pretty waitress.

"*Par exemple ?*"

"Behold the Irish officers at the corner table! They talk of the trenches—the Opera, the amusements of Paris—when one is within hearing. The moment one is at a little distance they mumble among themselves of other matters."

"Possibly orders for a new 'offensive'—which must not

be known! Regimental gossip of their own—affairs of the army in general, *ma fille!*"

"*Oui—oui*—one thinks of all those things. They do not altogether explain. *Par exemple*, M'sieu' Couramont, the Deputy, dines frequently with some of their party, and ladies—as he does this evening. Those at each table bow to the others—also to people in different parts of the cabaret. When they leave here, most of the Irish officers go by different streets to the apartment of M'sieu' le Capitaine Fitzpatrick, where they play at cards until midnight. M'sieu' Couramont I have three times seen there with them. While they play, it is evident they discuss other matters of great importance. Me—I am *chez moi au cinquième*, in the rear of that house which is on the other street. From my window one looks into those of M. le Capitaine, one floor below, across the court. Upon four evenings of the week I leave *Les Trois Gascons à dix heures;* upon the other three I am here earlier and leave before the dinner."

"H-m-m—you have not fear of me, *ma fille?*"

"But no, *M'sieu' le Chevalier! Pourquoi?* It is that you rescued me, that time! It is that you are *gentilhomme!*"

"*Peste!* It is not that which I meant! You believe that, me, I have the love of France—the love of my England? That I despise and am ever suspicious of *le boche?*"

"Ah! *Oui! Oui, m'sieu! Ma foi!*—it is of a certainty—that!"

"*Très bien!* Then—you will permit that I accompany thee to thy apartment when thou leavest—at ten o'clock?"

"But certainly, M'sieu'! It is my wish! Me—I am but a girl who knows little of State affairs—*mais une fille*

*de La France, tout le temps.* Perhaps I am foolish, that I watch the officers so closely and suspect—ah, one does not know what to suspect in such times! At least one does no harm to be alert."

She met him later, at a corner three blocks away, and they rode in a taxi to her apartment. As she had her own keys, there was no occasion to disturb the concierge; they climbed the five flights of stairs in silence and bolted her outer door after entering the suite. In order that no attention might be directed their way from the apartment across the court, she didn't turn on a single electric. Motioning him to an easy chair by the window, she fetched her opera glasses and perched herself upon the broad arm of it.

The night had proved warmer than usual, so that all three windows of Captain Fitzpatrick's apartment were open. Through a passage they could see the card-players in a farther salon, but men and women drifted back to the living room at the rear, from time to time examining pictures upon the wall, books and curios upon the table, or refreshing themselves from a cellaret in one corner. As Lammerford focussed the opera glasses, a group of three were examining one of the paintings, and called to Fitzpatrick in the other room:

"I say, old chap! Is this the picture you did on the Meuse?"

"Aye—an' I can assure you I've painted under more favorable conditions! We'd a bomb-proof dug from clay in front of the trench, with a floor of misfit planking about six inches off the ground. It was right enough in good weather—but after a day's rain, our feet were always

in the water. To get a decent light, I had my easel stuck up at the trench-opening—had a narrow escape, once or twice, before I finished the picture. Y'see that bit of a patch on the canvas, where the color is laid on thick with a palette-knife? That was done by a fragment of shrapnel which missed my forehead by a quarter of an inch an' made an awful hole in Tommy O'Brien, just beyond me, in the bomb-proof. It was two days before we could get his body to the rear."

"I see you've a bunch of new records! Taking them up with you on Thursday?"

"Aye—as far as commissary-headquarters. Pat O'Donnel is the last of our crowd to be stuck with trench-detail; we'll have him back of the lines next week. Then every man will be available when the time comes——"

"Faith, Boyle—*mind the post!* One never knows how far a voice may carry, ye know!"

"True for you, Phaidrig! But there's no harm done. 'Tis understood that we talk a bit among ourselves on what we hear of the Staff plans, an' everyone knows there'll be somethin' afoot before long."

For an hour Lammerford and Marie Latour caught no remarks from the other apartment which might be construed as having a double meaning. Then Couramont came into the rear room with one of the women for a glass of wine. They were chatting upon commonplace topics, but in the midst of it Sir Francis noticed her lips moving in an undertone. Having had a good deal of practice in lip-reading, he had little difficulty in understanding the question she asked: "When is it to be, *mon ami?*" But as the

Deputy was standing with his back to the window, the watchers could make nothing of his answer. In a few moments the party broke up—and Marie whispered:

"Is it that some danger threatens France, m'sieu'?"

"*Oui, ma belle !* One which is serious, of a certainty! And it's a question whether one may discover the details in time to kill the whole of it. Me—I know, now, of a dozen people who must be watched from hour to hour; yet if one speaks of the matter to *Monsieur le Préfet*, it is possible that plans of the War Staff may be disarranged in consequence. As yet, we have no proof that it is not some portion of the summer campaign which they have been discussing with so much secrecy—but me, I convince myself that it is something more serious than that. You will continue to watch, *ma belle*—both at *Les Trois Gascons* and here. I will write down the number of my own *pied-à-terre* in the Faubourg St. Honoré—so! You will come to me if you learn anything of importance. My concierge, Madame Fauvette, will admit thee to wait, if I am not *chez moi*. In the meanwhile, I will find others to keep our friends over there under observation."

As he picked up his hat and gloves, there was an expression upon her pretty face which indicated the extent to which his service three years before had won her affections. He kissed her in friendly *camaraderie*—and went down the stairs.

It was but eight or ten blocks to the Rue Royale, where he dropped in at the Automobile Club—happening to overhear a remark in the foyer which indicated a bit of unexpected good luck. A member was speaking of the Eng-

lish Admiral and European celebrity, Lord Trevor of Dartmoor, as having left the club not fifteen minutes before.

Calling a taxi, Sir Francis motored out to His Lordship's modest but perfect *hôtel* on the Avenue de Neuilly—maintained in constant readiness for occupancy, the year around, by his staff of English and Afghan servants. As Lammerford was considered a member of His Lordship's family, the Afghan *khansamah* welcomed him with deep respect and ushered him up to the room he usually occupied—His Lordship not having arrived. Within a few moments, however, Trevor came in—followed by Sabub Ali, more companion than servant, with the suitcases. Joining Sir Francis in the library, he lighted a long cigar and drew a breath of quiet satisfaction.

"Gad, 'Lammy,' it's a bit of luck, findin' you here—what!"

"That's the remark I made to myself when I heard you were in Paris! I lost no time getting out here!"

"Why? Have you picked up another thread—when nobody in the city appears to dream that anything of the sort is brewing?"

"Hmph! I don't know what *you've* happened upon! I've learned since morning that a prominent Deputy—an intensely 'loyal Frenchman' for eighteen years, mind you—is actually a *Wilhelmstrasse* agent, and is now planning some coup so far-reaching and unexpected that I'm more nervous than I've been in a good many months! What do *you* know about it?"

"As to anything at *this* end—nothing! Of course, there'll be little in the Paris papers for several days; we're keeping the thing as quiet as possible for obvious reasons.

But—*Sinn Feiners* captured the Dublin post office, the Métropole, and practically all of Sackville Street yesterday—shot a number of officers as they were returning from the races—are sniping off soldiers and civilians in every direction; and have burned hundreds of buildings. Scattered mobs of them are rising all through the South of Ireland. We knew, of course, that they were armed and drilling, but didn't look for any such treacherous outbreak while the Empire was fighting for its life! It'll take fifteen or twenty thousand of the army to handle the thing—an' there's no telling in how many other directions it may show itself! Sir Roger Casement was arrested near Tralee, after being put ashore from a German submarine—convoying a supply-ship with enough arms to have set half Ireland ablaze, or at least all the disaffected lot. Fortunately, three-quarters of the country is loyal to His Majesty's Government, and will remain so! But——"

"Aye—*but!* Now listen to what *I've* stumbled upon!"

(As briefly as possible, he sketched the haunting resemblance in Couramont's face as he came out of the Rue de Rivoli, and what he had since learned.) "There's not one of those officers or the women, either, who isn't Irish—and to the best of my knowledge, from the southern counties. Couramont, or Schmaltz, we know to be a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy who has been waiting eighteen years to do, at some critical moment, what he is ordered to do by his superiors in Berlin—probably serving the *Auswärtiges Amt* many times to good purpose, during those years, as well. And, undoubtedly, there are a dozen or more like him in this thing! From what you tell me, it's rather obvious that what they and those Irish officers are

planning is the more serious part of the *Sinn Fein* plot—and they've worked in the surest possible way to avert suspicion."

"We've certainly no proof to act upon yet, Lammy! Wait a bit! I think I know of a way to get some! Do you know—or do you remember hearing about—Corporal Dennis Corrigan, of that Limerick regiment? He lost his left hand and wrist in the early retreat—the rear-guard action—and was decorated for an act of conspicuous bravery. Being disabled, of course, he couldn't serve any more, and he opened a gambling club for officers in the Rue de Savoie, south of the Seine. It is winked at by the Préfecture because he maintains a quiet, orderly place where there is seldom any very high play—catering, largely, to the foreign element in Paris, though his rooms are patronized by journalists and members of the Chamber as well.

"I happen to know that Corrigan was an old-time *Fenian*—he's nearer sixty than forty-five, though you'd never imagine it from his appearance. I also know practically all the signs and passwords of the old *Fenian* organization and the *Sinn Fein*. One of my press syndicate editors obtained them for me at the risk of his life. Now it'll be a simple matter for me to obtain any sort of special passport I wish, for one of my syndicate war correspondents—say, an Irish-American New Yorker. Eh—what?"

"Hmph! We'd best let no word of this reach Lady Nan! She'd see the necessity, of course—but she'd have not a moment's peace until you were back in London. I'd undertake it myself—but your knowledge makes discovery less likely. I can watch the *Trois Gascons* and that

apartment of Marie Latour's. It's even possible that I may be able to conceal myself in Fitzpatrick's rooms during the next twenty-four hours."

Next evening the usual habitués of Corrigan's Club in the Rue de Savoie observed with respectful interest the skilful play and almost unbelievable luck of a well-set-up, middle-aged stranger whose manner and occasional remarks indicated the American war-correspondent now becoming so familiar to Parisians. The *banque* had been winning heavily from its regular patrons when the New Yorker arrived with Lieutenant James O'Connor—down for a two-day furlough—who had run across him in the *Café des Trois Gascons*. The smile of half-recognition upon the American's face convinced O'Connor that they had met before—"Reilly" being so thoroughly conversant with the families of Kerry and Cork, so prompt with certain words and signs which such a man should know, that the Lieutenant was anxious to have him meet Corrigan without delay. His sitting-in at the game and winning so irresistibly was merely incidental—but it won the admiration of every Irishman in the room, most of them having some knowledge of the deadly play a Tammany politician learns in New York.

Reilly at last cashed in for thirty thousand francs, the bulk of which had been won by the house from a Russian diplomat and one of the wealthy journalists of Paris before his arrival. Afterward O'Connor and a Major Phelan escorted him through a concealed passage into another building, where the one-handed Corrigan was smoking in a little private den. The ex-corporal appeared to be

thoroughly informed as to Reilly's winnings and his supposed antecedents—greeting him with a grin of appreciation.

"Faith, 'tis said a Tammany Irishman bates the worrld, me fri'nd—an, it's mesilf believes it! Sit ye down an' smoke a seegyar with me! (O'Connor, ye spalpane —'tis yourself knows where there'll be a dhrap of tha rale mountain dew in yon closet!) Tell me, now, Misther Reilly—how's the b'ys in New Yorrk, an' what ye'll be doin' over here in the newspaper line?"

Reilly—whom Lord Trevor's intimate friends would not have recognized, so completely misleading were the subtle changes he had made in dress and facial expression—named several papers of the syndicate he represented; exhibited very unusual credentials in the way of passport and special permits to visit the trenches; and implied, more by looks than words, that his errand in France was not altogether a journalistic one. He delighted them by handing over to Corrigan the entire thirty thousand francs he had just won—to be expended *in any worthy cause which the ex-corporal might have in mind*—and casually remarked that he had left Dublin two days before, completely disgusted with the impatience which had led to an outbreak there at a moment when it was practically certain to fail.

They listened to this in amazement—then put a sinister question or two which would have cost him his life had he answered with the slightest hesitation. But he exhibited such a grasp of details—having received by radiogram, three hours before, reports of the Dublin situation which they would have no means of getting for sev-

eral days—that he convinced them by what appeared to be absolute knowledge of far more than local conditions. After demonstrating the force of his contention until they saw it clearly, he risked a shot in the dark.

"I suppose you'll agree with me that the business over yon changes matters a good bit? For, d'ye see, if you attempt to go on with this end of the plan now, 'tis likely that many of ye are bein' watched! Before ye can act together, in one grand series of blows, they'll be nipping first one and then another—till it's the devil's own mess you'll be in, and a file of sharp-shooters against the first wall for every man!"

It was a chance. He scarcely dared hope it would draw them; yet it had been done with such consummate naturalness that they must have been gifted with almost superhuman telepathy to have avoided the trap. They fell into it with no suspicion of the bait.

"But—domn it all, man! There'll be never another chance in years! 'Tis ourselves has schamed for months—has watched this one an' that one till we know the day an' the hour they'll be in certain places! 'Tis the wires we've laid an' the frame-ups we've planned to lure thim all into five diff'rent places the same hour—so we can make a clane job of it! Joffre, Sarrail, an' ten Division Ginerals will be in Rheims the same avenin'! Poincaré, Briand, an' eighteen others of the Cabinet an' Chamber will be comin' out of the Chamber at a certain hour av the same night! They'll be two min doggin' every Mimber of the British Cabinet—fourteen l'aders of the Peers an' Commons—six admirals—an' eight major-ginerals over here—whin the hour strikes!"

"An' that night? Ye've set it for less than two weeks away, of course! That's why I'm tellin' ye 'tis madness—after the fools' work in Dublin!"

"Man—*'tis one wake from this night has been set f'r the job!*"

"Aye! While our own leaders are bein' shot in Dublin or the Tower! When the eyes of Europe are watchin' every Irishman in the British Isles and on the Continent! Go awn with it, if ye will! This day, two weeks, ye'll all be *rottin'* four feet under the sod! Send out the worrd, I tell ye! Send out the worrd to-morrow! Put off the day two months! Then 'twill come upon them like a blow in the dark—from heaven knows where—and ye'll paralyze the *Entente!* Do it now, an' the *Entente'*ll snuff ye out like so many candle-wicks! Go awn—any way ye like! I'm *tellin'* ye—that's all!"

They were impressed, convinced even; yet the sudden disarrangement of their plans threw them into momentary panic. How to inform each member of their organization in time? It seemed an impossible task.

"An' who'll carry the worrd to England, I'm wishin' to know?" (This, from Corrigan.) "'Tis possible, no doubt, to pass the worrd through France—an' I've a man can go to Rome this night. But, d'ye see, the most of us is detailed, here an' yon, behind the firin'-lines. They get away for a bit of furlough to rest from the strain of constant fightin'—but they must account for every move they make. We've no way of givin' the whisper to those in England unless one of us bears it there! 'Tis no aisy job to go an' come as ye plaze in these days—as ye well know, Reilly!"

Reilly lighted a fresh cigar—spread open his special passport upon the table.

"Faith, 'tis myself can do the job, if ye wish! My papers 'll pass me with little trouble, d'ye see. I would not be sittin' idle an' seein' a lot of the finest men old Ireland ever grew—God bless her!—lined up against a wall an' shot for makin' the mistake of strikin' before 'twas possible to drive the stroke home!"

The offer was made so naturally, spontaneously, that it carried them off their feet and banished every particle of suspicion they might have had. In half an hour he had committed to memory a dozen names and addresses in London, Manchester, and Liverpool, with additional passwords, and the cards of three officers which had little pencil-dots under certain engraved letters in each name.

Reilly was stopping at a little hotel frequented by Americans in the Rue de L'Echelle, and O'Connor went there with him when he left. In the morning the war correspondent assumed that he would be shadowed by some of the organization—so, after making a few purchases, he walked along to the *Café des Trois Gascons* for a late breakfast, casually sitting down at one of Marie Latour's tables as if he preferred the quieter part of the room. She had no recollection of ever having seen the man before; yet something in the glance he gave her appeared familiar. When she brought his omelette and coffee, he said—in so low a tone that it couldn't have been overheard ten feet away:

"You remember M'sieur le Chevalier—who was in your apartment last evening, *ma belle ?*"

"M'sieu' is insulting! One does not comprehend!"

"*Tres bien, ma fille!* Me—I make my apologies, and I entrust a message to your care. M'sieur le Chevalier will be here for his coffee and rolls very soon. Whisper to him: '*The Calais boat—this afternoon—without fail!*' He will understand perfectly—and you will have served France better than you know. Another *café-au-lait*, if you please —and bacon with the kidneys."

The message was delivered in his exact words—Marie feeling much relieved at Lammerford's assurance that it was from one of the great ones in the *Corps Diplomatique*. So it came about that Sir Francis was in the Gare du Nord when the Calais train pulled out—having barely time to run along the platform and jump into a compartment in which there was but one other passenger, an American war-correspondent who was reading an afternoon journal. After the guard had inspected their tickets—proceeding along the running-board outside of the coupés—Lammerford borrowed a light for his cigar from the American, and they fell into a casual discussion of the situation in the trenches. Long before the train reached Calais, he was asleep by the window at one end of the compartment—and Reilly, at the other; yet Lammerford was now conversant with the whole plot and knew just what action to take upon his return to Paris by the morning train.

When Reilly arrived at Charing Cross, a telegram from Sir Francis had preceded him. Consequently, after registering at the Piccadilly Hotel, he was given a room and bath on the second floor which, if required for such a purpose, could be made part of a suite—there being a communicating door on the opposite side of the bathroom. He had assumed that Corrigan was telling only the simple

truth when he said it was practically impossible for one of their organization to leave for England without a good deal of red tape which was sure to attract undesirable attention. But he was also convinced that the *Sinn Feiner* would manage in some way to have him followed at every step if it were possible to do so—hence the precautions which Lammerford had taken for him.

He reached the hotel about midnight—too late to see the men whose names he had memorized; so after a supper in the grill, he went to bed, turning off the lights within fifteen minutes after locking the door of his room. Meanwhile a wealthy mine-owner from the Cape—secretly connected with *Downing Street*—had been given the suite adjoining Reilly's. At ten o'clock Sir Edward Wray, *Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs*, had arrived at the Piccadilly in his motor and sent up a card to the mine-owner, who received him in his suite. When Reilly opened the door from his bathroom, at half-past twelve, Sir Edward was smoking in the dark, while his mining friend had shut himself into the further room of the suite. During that half-hour interview in the dark, Sir Edward was given names and addresses which he jotted down in pencil to avoid mistakes.

For the next forty-eight hours Reilly was busy motoring about London in a taxi, leaving cards, as a war-correspondent desiring interviews, at the houses of various people more or less prominent in the army or London society. In several instances he found the men at home and gave them Corrigan's instructions—the Londoners seeing the danger of immediate action in carrying out their prearranged plan more quickly than had the men in

France. The fiasco in Dublin was having its effect upon them, and the military executions had a very sobering influence even while they enraged the conspirators almost beyond endurance.

In each interview Lord Trevor—as the pseudo-Reilly—had the feeling that the man with whom he had been talking was merely an executive, that the brains of the whole movement was a person of much greater influence and prominence. Consequently his casual glances about the different rooms took and recorded every little detail which might be of use in tracing the chief conspirator. In one house the gentleman was obliged to leave the room for a few moments in response to a message from one of the ladies of his family. During his absence Trevor noticed a fragment of paper covered with fine handwriting upon the flat-topped library desk—a half page apparently torn from some letter. The writing appeared curiously familiar, but he couldn't place it—so he pocketed the scrap for more careful examination later.

He knew that any one who might be following him about during the day would consider his calling upon one or two prominent men not connected with the conspiracy a clever blind to cover the work he was actually doing—so he motored around to his own Park Lane mansion about six in the afternoon. As soon as he was inside and had been recognized by his Afghan *khansamah*, he went into the big library to search through half a dozen great scrapbooks which contained many thousands of handwriting-specimens, arranged and indexed according to their style—their heavy or light strokes, peculiar formations of vowels and consonants, and general alignment. In the

course of an hour he came upon two pages of specimens very closely resembling the scrap he had managed to secure—but not exactly. Upon the next page he found a fac-simile—with a well-known signature under it.

"Lord Kilimainine! My word! A Kerry man, to be sure—and yet—who'd have thought it! A man who has served for years in the diplomatic service—has received honors and preferment from the Crown!"

The man who left the Trevor mansion and motored away in his taxi resembled Mr. Reilly in a general way. The chauffeur didn't look at him closely, but drove him back to the Hotel Piccadilly, where he paid the taxi-fare and went in as if stopping there. At the desk, however, he merely asked for a gentleman whom he knew was not in at the time—and went out by the Regent Street entrance. That was the last ever seen of Reilly, the New York war-correspondent. His suitcase was held by the hotel people for a month or so, and Scotland Yard notified, but it was finally assumed that he had been waylaid and killed in some mysterious manner.

At nine o'clock on the evening he disappeared, Lord Trevor, with Sir Edward Wray and two officers of the General Staff, called upon Lord Kilimainine at his luxuriously furnished town house. He received them courteously, escorting the party back to his smoking room at the rear of the house, overlooking a walled garden. Trevor indicated the object of their visit by expressing his understanding that Kilimainine was rather well acquainted with the French Deputy, M. Henri Couramont—asking whether he could give them any information as to the

man's antecedents. The Irishman's eyes narrowed slightly as he glanced from one to another of them. Subconsciously, he noticed that none of the four had lighted the cigars he offered them.

"I've met the man, Your Lordship, more than once—but in a purely social way. Do you mind telling me your object in asking such a question?"

"Why—er—Couramont was executed this afternoon, in Paris, in a rather sensational way. He was arrested at his offices in the *Courier du Matin* building—placed, handcuffed, in an open cart—driven up and down the Champs Elysées and the Boulevards for several hours with a placard on his back. This placard stated that for eighteen years he had posed as a loyal Frenchman, gaining honors and position in Paris, while all the time he was actually Captain Heinrich Schmaltz, a secret agent of *Wilhelmstrasse*. At sunset in the Place de la Concorde, which was packed with one of the largest crowds ever gathered there, he was shot. It had been discovered that he was one of the chief instigators of a *Sinn Fein* plot which contemplated a good deal more serious and widespread action than the Dublin affair. The other leader is known to be a certain Irish peer."

With a smile of sardonic incredulity, as they supposed, Kilimainine opened a drawer of the table by which he sat, and reached in—apparently for a document which they could see at the back of it. When his hand came out, however, there was a flash—a stunning report.

Lord Trevor winced a little as the ball went through the inner muscles of his left arm—though the eye behind his monocle continued to gaze inquiringly at his would-be

assassin. Then there came an answering flash from the vicinity of his right hip. Lord Kilimainine sank back in his chair, shot through the heart—and Trevor was hurried out of the house by one of the generals before the arrival of the doctor or members of Kilimainine's family. As the starched front of the dead man's evening-shirt was somewhat blackened by powder grains, it was assumed that he had committed suicide.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SKAGER-RACK—AND KITCHENER

LORD TREVOR'S wound proved to be a slight one which kept him indoors but a few days. He was going into the Admiralty for a conference, one afternoon, when he passed a man of thirty-five or more who walked with the nervously impatient step of an American. He had the manner of a student or inventor—a type quite familiar to the Viscount. A few moments later, while chatting with the *First Lord of the Admiralty*, that statesman commented upon the annoyance to which the Admiralty and the War Office were subjected from visionaries with schemes for conducting the war, and inventors with war-appliances of every description.

"Not ten minutes ago," he said, "there was an American in here trying to interest me in a new machine for detecting the exact location of distant wireless stations from any given point. He obtained the appointment through his Ambassador, so I was obliged to give him a few minutes and file a description of his device for examination when some junior of the Signal Service has time and opportunity for a test. These chaps never seem to understand that we have our own staff of experts at the Admiralty who are constantly experimenting along such lines and are quite likely to have gone much further than they!"

"Hmph! That's rawther in my line, don't you know—the Wireless Service. Might be worth our while to see what the chap really has—eh, what? Suppose you have him bring his device to me in Park Lane? Since I put up those long aërials in my own grounds, on two-hundred-foot masts, I've caught more than one message from Berlin. It would be a capital place for testin' out whatever he has, don't you know—an' without takin' up the time of you busy people. What?"

The Cabinet Minister picked up a card from his desk and gave it to His Lordship—who talked for a few minutes upon Service matters and then went out to his waiting car. Glancing at the card, he mentioned an address to his Afghan chauffeur. In fifteen minutes they stopped before a small house facing the river in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea—kept by a naval officer's widow who let her upper rooms as lodgings and provided breakfasts when required. In a large front room Lord Trevor found the American, Hiram Meredith, working over some battery fittings at a bench which he had rigged up against the wall.

The man looked from the card to His Lordship's face, and back again.

"You're really Lord Trevor of Dartmoor—the famous Lord Trevor—no fooling? H-m-m—I sort of reco'nize you, now, from the slew of pictures I've seen! Funny! When I heard your step on the stairs, I'd have sworn you were an American like me!"

"Faith, you're quite right as to that, Mr. Meredith! I was born in Boston, don't you know. Saw you comin' out of the Admir'lty, this awfternoon—an' Balfour told me you had something new in the way of an *electro-mag-*

*netic detector.* I hold a Rear Admir'l's commission in the British Navy, d'ye see—an' others in the Aviation an' Signal Services as well. You don't quite understand that—eh? I've specialized in all three, don't you know—an' they frequ'ntly use me in advisory capacity. Now—as to this invention of yours? Have you a workin' model of the device, here, with which it would be possible to make a test?"

"Sure! The whole thing's in that box on the end of the bench! It's a leetle more bulky than the receivin' instruments now in use, but it don't work to best advantage unless on a pretty solid base—so the size ain't so much of an objection."

"Are the adjustm'nts so delicate that it cawn't be moved without puttin' the mechanism out of order?"

"Oh, hell, no! Move it anywhere you like, an' I'll have it ready for business inside of an hour. I've heard a good deal about you, Mister Lord—and thought, more'n once, it would be a stroke of luck if I could get you interested in my *detector*, cause you have a reputation of goin' the limit in everything you tackle—but you was too big a man for me to chase round after! You got millions where I got dollars! Of course, that don't make you any better'n I am, as a man, but it sure calls for a lot more of your personal time. I tackled the Admiralty cause they got plenty of stations where a test can be made. To save my soul I can't get permission, here, to string a couple of short-len'th aërials for experimentin'! Guess there ain't much question about *your* gettin' 'em to let you make a test 'most anywhere. So you see how much I appreciate this call of yours. Jest say where you want to have my machine toted, an' she'll be

there any time you like! I've got the goods, Mister Lord —you'll say so when you see the thing work!"

"There's one triflin' formality to be gotten around, Mr. Meredith. Will the American ambassador vouch for your friendship toward the British Governm'nt? Does he know enough about you to guarantee that you won't betray any war-secrets you may pick up through this machine of yours?"

"Who—Page? Hell! I've pestered him so much since I came over here that he knows all about me for thirty years back! We're straight English descent—and if I couldn't do more good this way than by fightin' in the trenches, I'd enlist over here. Suppose we go around to the Embassy an' see him?"

"Very good! I was about to suggest that. An' we'd best take along your machine in the car. I've my own wireless, in the grounds of my town house, so you'll find everything you require, I fawncy."

Assurances given by the American Ambassador being entirely satisfactory, they went directly from Victoria Street to Park Lane—where two of his Afghan servants took the black box from the car and carried it to the rear of the main hall, stepping into a small American elevator. As the lift descended Meredith roughly estimated the depth reached as, approximately, forty feet. The cage stopped before a steel door set in solid masonry—and when this was opened by His Lordship with a Yale key, they walked along an electrically lighted passage until they came to another steel door, opening into an underground chamber fitted up with every known appliance for wireless telephoning and telegraphy. The Afghans had

followed them with the box—which, at His Lordship's suggestion, they placed upon a slate-covered concrete bench running along one side of the room. With a nod of satisfaction the American took off his coat, unbolted the sides and top of the box, and carefully lifted his machine out upon the slate foundation. He then made a number of delicate adjustments by means of set-screws, connected two of the binding posts to wires leading from a storage battery which Lord Trevor pointed out—and finally expressed his belief that the instruments were in perfect working order.

"Now, if you'll tell me where the aërial connection is, Mr. Lord—I'll be able to show you something! By the way, if you happen to have a large-scale map of everything within a hundred miles, it'll help us a lot! We can use a map of Europe, too, I guess—those aërials of yours ought to catch anything within fifteen hundred miles at the very least. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if you got the Arlington station at Washington, occasionally."

"Oh, aye! We heard them when they were talkin' to the Eiffel Tower in Paris. (Er—Sabub! You know where to find the Ordnance maps, in the lib'ry—an' the large-scale 'topographic' Europe! Fetch them down to us, will you? An' you might have a bit of lunch an' some wine sent down at the same time. We may be here for two or three hours.)"

When the stately Afghan *khansamah* disappeared along the passage, Meredith asked:

"How the devil do you ventilate this place? I'd say we must be at least forty feet underground—no possible

chance of any one hearin' your *spark*—yet the air's as pure as in the hall of your house!"

"There's a fresh-air duct just under the eaves, forty-two feet above the garden level, an' the exhaust goes out through one of the chimneys—electric blower keeps it moving—sound-deadeners like *Maxim silencers* in both flues. My grounds are patrolled at night—no chance of any one tamperin' with the aërials—an' the connection is taken down through one of the house chimneys, which has a built-in pipe for the purpose. You can run your wires to those two binding posts in the wall—just below the *lightning arrester*." In a few moments the connections were made, and duplicate head-frames attached to the instruments.

"P'raps I'd better give you some idea of how she works, then you can see better what happens. The principle is kinda like Marconi's recent invention—but my machine goes a good deal farther than his in the way of exact results. You've seen the radiating waves in a puddle, after you chucked a stone in it—and of course you know the Hertzian waves radiate the same way—an' that we talk of the individual impulses through the air as five hundred-meter, fifteen hundred-metre, or two thousand-metre wave-lengths, according to the electro-dynamic force of the splash made in the atmosphere by the spark as the impulse is thrown off from the aërials. A little splash in the pond makes little ripples—only a few inches apart; a heavy splash makes big ripples—several feet apart; and all the ripples gradually flatten out so's you can't notice 'em as they get farther an' farther from the splash. Well, my instruments register, to a mighty fine point, the weakening of

those wave-impulses in the air, so I'm able to gauge within a quarter of a mile how far away the spark is that sends 'em. The matter of direction is a *leetle* more difficult to get at. If you was standin' on an island in the middle of a pond, an' a stone was dropped into the water, say, at the eastern edge of it, the concentric ripples would only come to your island on its east side; north, west, an' south of it the water would be perfectly smooth. But if the pond was pretty big, the ripples would be so long that you couldn't hardly tell, fom the curvature alone, the exact spot they was comin' from. All the same, the top of the curve would hit your island a leetle mite before the rest of it——"

"And your device registers the varyin' intensity of the wave-impulse along a certain sector of the compass—what?"

"That's the idea exactly. This little incandescent lamp is connected with a compass which can be electrically isolated from different points, or bearings—the needle bein' drawn to'ard the direction the waves are comin' from. If no impulse is comin' from the west, when the *rheostat* is set to a certain wave-length, the lamp will remain black—though it will glow cherry-red if the coil is exposed to the north an' south (supposin' the impulse is comin' from the east). When it's exposed fully to the east it gets its brightest illumination an' throws the blackest shadow from a wooden peg on a revolvin' disc. By movin' the isolatin' sector around—notin' the stren'th of the illumination an' shadow from the peg—I get within one or two points of the true compass bearing. Now, jest put on that head-frame, an' we'll make a test."

There was a confused jumble of *zzip-zzip-zziping* on the diaphragms—above which one lot sounded a trifle clearer than the others. "That fellow is sendin' at about two thousand metres, I should say!" (Shoving over the *audion-adjustment* to that wave-length.) "Ah! Now we've got him! He's callin' B-X-B—B-X-B—B-X-B —and there goes the other feller, answerin' him! If you'll write down what he says, Mister Lord, I'll figure the distance an' direction."

Followed several minutes of silence—during which Lord Trevor jotted down a string of apparently meaningless words, as the American's fingers deftly manipulated a number of little switches and levers while he closely watched a mariner's compass and the little incandescent lamp.

"Hmph! Those chaps are talking in what I thought was our Navy code, at first—but some of the words don't appear to make sense! About where do your instruments say they are?"

"Nearest one is East—three-quarters South—twenty-three miles. T'other feller is an even hundred an' ninety-seven miles, East by South—a quarter South."

Spreading the big topographic map of Europe upon a broad table in the middle of the room, His Lordship measured distances with a celluloid compass-card and thread, then looked up with an expression of protest.

"I fawncy you failed to score that time, old chap! If your figures were correct, our Naval Station at Woolwich Dockyard *was talkin' with some German station in Brussels* —which is, of course, impossible!"

"You got the message there—an' you can prob'ly get

hold of your Navy code-book. Before you're so positive my instruments are wrong, perhaps you'd better figger out that message! Wait a minute! You're dead sure I'm wrong, Mister Lord—an' I'm dead sure I'm right! Suppose we test this out a different way? You call up some station you talk with, occasionally—don't tell me what it is, or in what direction. Call it by the letters down in your Navy code, or some other one that I don't know anything about, so I can't possibly guess the name—and I'll locate it for you to within quarter of a mile!"

"Very good! That's certainly a fair test!"

His Lordship sat down at the operating-table, started his dynamo, moved the switch from under his key, and commenced calling a two-letter number. In three minutes he caught the acknowledgment—asked a couple of questions which were answered at length—and stopped. Meredith figured for a moment then quietly said:

"Ninety-eight miles, air line, Southwest by West—and you were usin' eighteen hundred metres—a rather unusual len'th."

Trevor spread an Ordnance map of southern England upon the table—measuring off the distance with the celluloid compass-card and thread.

"*Poole*, by Jove! My word, Meredith—you win! Even if you'd known the code an' recognized the call, you couldn't have been sure enough—of the station that would occur to me—to have figured the distance in advance. Just for conclusive proof, suppose we try that same test on two other places?"

His Lordship called a station in northern Scotland—which answered after fifteen minutes—and then a Naval

station in Ireland—both of which the American spotted accurately. His distance was a mile short in the first instance, and a quarter of a point off in regard to the Irish one—but the faults might have been due to imperfect printing of the maps as easily as to inaccuracies in his instrument, on distances of that length. For practical purposes, the instrument was a marvel—of such unquestionable value to the British Government that Trevor determined to obtain control of it before the inventor left Park Lane.

"I say, Meredith! You've patented the thing in the United Kingdom?"

"Patent applied for—and granted in the United States. The red tape makes it a lot slower over here."

"Hmph! I fawncy there are ways of pushin' matters—an' you'd best not lose a day more than necess'ry! I'll make you a proposition—which you may accept or decline at once. First, you're to show me how to use your instruments, myself. I will then make half a dozen tests—to be quite certain I can operate it under varyin' conditions. If the tests agree with those we have just made, I will at once draw my cheque to your order for the sum of twenty thousand pounds, purchasing a forty per cent. interest in the manufacture, leasing, and profits of your instruments. After which I will take it upon myself to secure patents in the United Kingdom, France, and Italy—within a fortnight—patents to be owned by the Limited Comp'ny we form. I'll guarantee the yearly lease of five hundred machines at two hundred pounds each—by the British Governm'nt or myself—as soon as they can be manufactured under your supervision. My time is too thoroughly occupied to chaffer with you in a number of in-

clusive interviews. If you don't care to accept this offer, which seems quite to your advantage, the matter is closed between us an' you're at liberty to interest the Ad'mrlty or any one else, if you can." There was a moment or two of silence while Meredith jotted down the proposition with his pencil—and studied it.

"Say, Mister Lord—I guess you play poker some in your spare evenin's! That there proposition of yourn is kinda like an ultimatum, ain't it? You know damn well I ain't likely to get anywhere with the politicians over here until I've worn out all my shoe-leather. But I'll take you up! The way you put it sounds fair enough, I s'pose. I'll just hammer it out on that typewriter yonder; then we'll both sign it, an' I'll teach you how to work the instruments. You needn't pay me a cent until the thing satisfies you, but we'll sign the agreement first, as a basis of understandin'. By the way, before I forget it, that talk you overheard between Woolwich and Brussels was from *four fifty-three* to *five fifteen* P.M. Greenwich time. I took a memorandum of it in case you wanted to check up that message somewhere."

By half-past six Lord Trevor was entirely satisfied that the instruments would do everything claimed for them and that he could operate them without assistance. In the next half hour the agreement was signed, witnessed, and the big cheque on Coutts's Bank handed over to the American, who was then invited to dine with His Lordship and Lady Nan—an honor which he thoroughly appreciated as such in spite of his democratic principles.

After he had left Park Lane Sir Edward Wray and Sir Francis Lammerford were summoned by telephone for

a conference. When they reached the house, at ten in the evening, Lord and Lady Trevor were busy in the Jacobean library with half a dozen code-books and several sheets of paper upon which a number of translations had been worked out. As briefly as possible the Foreign Minister and Sir Francis were given the facts concerning Meredith's amazing instruments and the mysterious message which had been picked up.

"Being sent from Woolwich," said His Lordship, "one naturally infers it to have been in the regular Navy code. But according to that, all one can make of it is this—the blanks representin' words which do not occur in our code at all:

"'*Forty thousand infantry—on duty Sunday night—northern munition factories—detailed for summer manœuvres—17 Batteries 75 m|m guns with General Staff—and sentry details—mobilization ordered for 23rd—transports leaving for the Cape.*'

"Of course, all this is simply gibberish. In the Army and F. O. codes it makes no better sense than this. I cawn't be mistaken in what I heard, because Meredith caught enough of it to repeat most of what I'd written before he even saw it. After workin' out this stuff, it occurred to me to look up that *Wilhelmstrasse* code I managed to sneak out of Berlin when 'Lammy' an' I escaped in the zeppelin—an', with that, I made a coherent message out of the de-coding, though it appears childish when read:

"'*Family scattered for the present—children are at the northern beaches—Father and Mother yachting around*

*the Island—Fred, and fifteen of the upper-form lads, cramming with tutor in Scotland.'*

"Now, of course we know that none of His Majesty's officers are usin' the station at Woolwich Dockyard for personal gossip with pals or relatives across the Channel in times like these. If any of the signal quartermasters did a thing of that sort he'd serve a month in clink for it. But the fact that the message makes perfect sense in the *Wilhelmstrasse* code proves that it was *not* one of our officers gossiping with some friend, an' that the words most assuredly have some ulterior meaning. We know it's a favorite trick of *Wilhelmstrasse* to use a code within a code. So, merely to form an hypothesis, let us assume a few arbitrary key words an' see what we make of it. Suppose, for example, the word *family* stands for the British North Sea fleet—the word *children* for the light cruiser squadron or torpedo flotilla—the words *Father* and *Mother*, for the main fightin' ships—an' *Fred and fifteen upper-form lads* to mean 'one super-dreadnought and fifteen first-class cruisers'. Eh—what? De-code the message on that basis an' it reads

"'*North Sea Fleet temporarily divided—cruiser squadron and torpedo flotilla off Skager-Rack. Main super-dreadnought squadron off Heligoland. One battleship and fifteen cruisers coaling or repairing at Rosyth.*'"

"My word, George! I wonder whether that's anything like the actual disposition of the Fleet to-night?"

"It happens to be the Admir'lty orders to Jellicoe—sent by one of the thirty-five knot destroyers from Sheerness

this awfternoon! When Meredith told me at five-fifteen that Woolwich had been talkin' to a *Telefunken* station in Brussels, I laughed at him! But I took down that message myself—an' here's a translation which corresponds, word for word, with the Admir'lty orders! The Rosyth information was prob'ly sent down by some German spy on the spot; an' there's no question as to there bein' a leak right here. You'd best get after that, Ned—an' look sharp! The *boches* will take advawntage of any chance they get, you may be quite sure! I'm goin' to make it my business to look into that Naval station at Woolwich. I happen to know both of the signal quartermasters in charge of it—an' I'd almost stake my life on their loyalty!"

"But—deuce take it, old chap! The whole bally thing is simply preposterous! When you come right down to scientific facts, isn't your American inventor's machine quite as much so? How the devil can you gauge so closely the exact distance of an electric impulse travelin' thousands of miles a second?"

"How is it possible to sit in a New York hotel and carry on a conversation with someone in San Francisco who is actually talkin' five hours *later* than you by the sun and the clock? There's no room for doubt as to what those instruments *do*. One shouldn't forget Marconi's machine on similar lines which actually located a German station in Rome three months ago."

While the men had been concentrating upon the apparent treachery in the wireless station at Woolwich, as being of the first importance, Lady Nan was trying to remember everyone associated with Admiralty officers,

intimately enough to be in a position where they might possibly overhear some of the secret orders given. Presently she asked:

"George, can you give me an idea of just how many people would be likely to know of those orders to the North Sea fleet before they reached Jellicoe?"

"Why, I fancy I'll come rawther close to it, Nan. Balfour, as *First Lord*, might know of them or might not—probably not, because it would be one of the workin' details which he could ascertain at any moment he desired the information. But any of the four *Sea Lords* might have the direct handling of the North Sea fleet—presumably, Admir'l Sir Henry Jackson, the *First Sea Lord*. An' of course, that means their four private secretaries also. Then there would be Vice Admir'l Oliver, *Chief of the War Staff*, an' his assistant, Captain Day; Captain Hall, *Director of the Intelligence Division*, an' his Assistant, Captain Smith. The messenger sent on that destroyer to Jellicoe was Commander John De Vincey—he'd be the only one on the boat to know anything about the orders. Of course, if Balfour had discussed them at all with Sir Henry, either his own Naval secretary or his two private secretaries would be likely to hear something of it. Which foots up at least sixteen people at the Admiralty who might have had the information. Of course, nobody at Woolwich Dockyard had any business to know of the orders at all!"

She had been jotting down the names as he gave them, and writing several others opposite each one. "I know the families of all except those of the secretaries to Rear Admiral Tudor and Commodore Lambert—and Captains

Day and Smith. Can you furnish any information regarding them, 'Lammy'?"

"Yes, but it would be unnecessary. All four are close-mouthed chaps who never discuss Service affairs with any member of their families. They're in line for very desirable promotion and would see that no act of theirs jeopardized it. But—er—I fancy you've overlooked three individuals who are not closely connected with those we've mentioned. For example, there is Miss Violet Wilmerton, an American who is a connection of Lady Ranbourne's, and has been for several weeks a house-guest of the Second Lord's family. Mr. Olav Nordstern—a British subject, of Norwegian family—is stopping in the home of the Naval Secretary. And Mrs. De Peyster, a charming young American widow, is the most intimate friend of Private Secretary Lampton's wife—at their house constantly, and frequently using permits obtained by him to go over the warships with Mrs. Lampton. Of course, if all our good friends are really as close-mouthed as we believe, in the privacy of their homes, those three people would have no opportunity for obtaining vital information; but they might pick up something an' deduce a lot more, if they're particularly clever."

"Have you any reason for suspecting either of the three, 'Lammy'?"

"Not the slightest! I've met all of them—frequently. As far as I can judge, they all hate the *boche* as thoroughly as we do, and want the *Entente* to win. In fact, Nordstern is unusually bitter for a man whose father was a Norwegian—an' the two American women are strongly partisan in the way they talk."

"You say Miss Wilmerton is a connection of Lady Ranbourne's—do you know where she comes from, in the States? Is there any one to whom you might cable for information concerning her?"

"Oh, aye. Her home is in Philadelphia. My friend Biddle comes from one of the old Philadelphia families—knows everybody's great-grandfather. He frequently gives me valuable pointers; in fact, our correspondence is such an active one that we have our own private code for cablegrams."

"Hmph! I wish you'd humor my curiosity, 'Lammy,' by cabling him now—concerning Miss Wilmerton!"

"Certainly—if you wish." (Taking a small memorandum-book from an inner pocket, Lammerford rapidly jotted down a cipher cablegram which was promptly dispatched over Lord Trevor's private wire to the cable office, where it was censored and passed without delay.)

"You speak as if you had some reason for bein' suspicious of the young woman, Nan?"

"I'd no idea she was staying as a guest in *Hamilton House* until you told me. She went about quite a good deal, last winter, with our friend Chudleigh Sammis, M.P. —whom we know for a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy. After we broke up that conspiracy to influence the Cabinet Ministers, and caused twenty-five well-known people to disappear from London so mysteriously, she apparently quarreled with him for something he said or did—and hasn't been seen with him since. If it was something which made her suspect his loyalty to England was a trifle lukewarm, that quarrel is the best guarantee we could have as to her own honesty. But if they only pretended

to break off the friendship because they feared he was under suspicion, and didn't wish to jeopardize her own opportunities for doing *Wilhelmstrasse* work—eh? That's really quite as possible as the other theory, you know."

For two hours longer they discussed various possibilities connected with the leak at the Admiralty. Then Sabub Ali came up from the telegraph-cellar with a code-message for Sir Francis Lammerford—just received from Philadelphia, and passed by the Censor.

*"Violet's parents, Thomas K. Wilmerton—first cousin, Lady Susan—2nd wife, Lord Ranbourne—and Hilda von Schemmerling, born Charlottenberg, aristocratic Prussian family. With exception one other intermarriage, 1794, with Helmuths of Vienna, Wilmertons American stock since 1760. Thomas K. importer dyestuffs—factories in Germany and Austria. Violet said to be engaged, May, 1914, Lieut. Karl von Ingen—German Embassy. Engagement supposed broken last year."*

When Sir Francis had read the message to them, an expression of amazed understanding appeared in each face.

"My word, Nan! Your intuitions are a bit uncanny at times! Faith, I fancy this settles Miss Violet Wilmerton's standing in England! No bally doubt of it! She's been workin' with that cursed fiancé of hers in the *Wilhelmstrasse* service ever since she came over here—an' Chudleigh Sammis very shrewdly gave her the tip to quarrel with him the moment the Cabinet plot fell through. D'ye know, that bounder is breathin' a lot easier, just now—he fancies we somehow missed him altogether in that affair, an' is beginnin' to be a bit more careless in regard to the

people he talks with. I was against lettin' him alone when Nan suggested it—but I'll frankly admit she was right. He's the most valuable stool-pigeon in England to-day!"

"Well, on the ground of circumstantial evidence, we may as well assume that the Admiralty leak is through this Wilmerton woman. Even at the risk of havin' important information get across the Channel. I fawncy we'd best let her alone for the present, in *Hamilton House*, an' have *Downing Street* men track her, every step she takes. She has confederates—prob'ly in various places. By watchin' her constantly we'll get them before they can do much damage." (This decision was to cost the British Navy several of its biggest cruisers and seven thousand heroic British sailors—as it worked out. Yet, nevertheless, it gave England control of the Baltic and tightened the blockade around Germany.)

Next morning, accompanied by a senior captain from the Admiralty, Lord Trevor motored to Woolwich. Without referring, at first, to the wireless station, they obtained information as to the occupations of every man on duty at the royal arsenal and the Dockyard during the previous afternoon. As His Lordship had expected, no one had been in the operating-room of the wireless station but the quartermasters detailed there for signal duty. When they finally went into the operating-room, the two quartermasters recognized His Lordship at once as the Admiral who had recommended them for promotion after very creditable service under him at the Dardanelles.

"Wilkins—you and Munn were on duty here yesterday afternoon?"

"Aye, sir."

"Was any one else around this station—either in this room, on the roof, climbing the aërial masts to make repairs—or, say, within two hundred feet of the building, during your watch?"

"No one but the engine-room artificer in charge of the petrol-motors in the cellar, sir."

"You're positive of that, are you?"

"Aye, sir—quite positive."

"What were you doing at two-bells—an' during the fifteen minutes afterward?"

"'Avin' our tea an' cakes, sir. Sheerness was relievin' us for twenty minutes while we b'ils our tea an' 'as our bite, sir—as is customary, sir. We tikes *their* calls durin' the 'arf-hour just before that, sir."

"Then, as far as you know, there was no message sent from this station between four-fifty and five-fifteen yesterday afternoon?"

"None whatever, sir! The artificer will tell you the motors an' dynamos was shut down for a quarter of an hour, both sides of two-bells, sir."

"Er—just where are your aërial connections?"

"Right away 'ere, sir—these two heavy insulated wires w'ich Your Ludship can see goin' up through the roof in them two iron pipes. Outside the roof, they're in plain sight, right away up to the aërials. The lightnin'-arrester connection is just 'ere, sir, above the operatin' table—you can see the wires leadin' out above the window, an' down into the ground."

"Any metal connection between the aërials and the skeleton-steel masts?"

"No, sir—none whatsomever. The *grid*, an' even the supportin' guys, is insulated from the masts."

That he might leave nothing to chance, Trevor ordered a couple of the dockyard men to dig down as far as the plates to which the wires from the lightning-arrester were fastened—three feet underground, outside the station—but no other connection to them was found. Nor was there any trace of underground wires connecting with the tall skeleton masts. In fact, the only possibility His Lordship could see for the sending of an enemy message from that particular station lay in the treachery of the two quartermasters—who had each served three enlistments in the Royal navy and had been detailed with him for exceedingly dangerous service in the Levant. It was a possibility which he considered so dim a one that he refused to accept it until conviction was forced upon him.

While Trevor and Captain Marshall were in the wireless station a party of three naval officers and two very attractive women had motored down for a visit of inspection to the big dockyard. Civilians were not allowed on the premises, during the war, unless in exceptional cases; but one of the ladies happened to be the wife of a prominent naval officer, and the other an intimate friend who had been for some time a guest in her house.

As they got out of their car a junior lieutenant suddenly appeared, with some communication for the captain who was showing the ladies about. The discussion of his message was seemingly of sufficient importance to keep them talking as the group strolled along through the dockyard, but the lieutenant did his best to keep an unobtrusive eye upon Miss Violet Wilmerton.

She appeared very much interested in everything they saw—asking questions and making comparisons with American naval yards. Here and there, some warrant officer in charge of a detail was introduced to her and asked to explain his particular work. None of these introductions was overlooked by the lieutenant, who was discussing Service matters with her friend's husband—but without making the espionage so marked as to betray him, it was impossible to be, in each instance, close enough to overhear every remark she made.

So it happened that the lieutenant missed, altogether, the few words breathed without a motion of the lips into the ear of a young artificer who was explaining to her the operation of a lathe in one of the machine-shops: "I *am dropping a little wad of paper by the edge of my skirt. Put your foot on it. Wait until we are out of the shop!*" In the next breath, she thanked him, audibly, for explaining his machine to her, and walked on with the others.

The artificer bowed, and stood where he was until they had passed through the door; then he resumed his directing of the men under him. But as he stepped along any one who had seen the wad of paper fall by Miss Wilmerton's skirt would have wondered what became of it. It was nowhere visible—either under the lathe or anywhere on the floor.

At noon Garraway—the "artificer"—was off duty for the afternoon watch. While changing from overalls into his service uniform, one of his mates noticed him prying off with his jack-knife, from the sole of his shoe, a lump of pitch in which something was sticking—and apparently tossing the object through the window into the

river. That was all there was to it—a perfectly natural action which the other man never thought of again. As Garraway happened to be a good conduct man, he was privileged to leave the Dockyard in his off-watch—so, after duly reporting, he walked along Church and High streets until he came to the little ferry, and took the first boat across to North Woolwich on the other bank of the Thames.

Lord Trevor, having left Captain Marshall in the commandant's quarters for an hour or so, had taken the notion for a walk about the river-streets of North Woolwich, with the object of getting a look at the wireless-masts from across the Thames—and was on the same boat. Although in one of his habitual gray morning suits, he was so frequently recognized and saluted as an admiral that Garraway's fingers instinctively went to his cap as he caught His Lordship's glance—thereby leaving a subconscious photograph of his face and appearance at the back of the peer's brain—to be recalled later.

Garraway left the boat ahead of His Lordship and walked smartly along North Woolwich Road until he came to the corner of Tate Street, up which he turned until he reached an unpretentious saloon upon the ground floor of a cheap boarding-house. For no conscious reason Lord Trevor had kept his swinging athletic figure in view, as they walked along, and rather aimlessly turned up Tate Street after the man. The door of the pub swung open as the Viscount passed—and he saw Garraway seated at a sloppy table in the farther corner with a stiff glass of rum before him.

For half an hour His Lordship walked about the short

streets of North Woolwich and Silverton—getting views of the towering wireless-masts on the south bank of the river from various angles. Then it occurred to him that he might beckon the warrant-officer out of the groggery and ask him a few casual questions about the locality. But, when he returned and glanced in at the door, Garraway had collapsed in his chair, with arms and head upon the sloppy table—apparently in a drunken sleep—and it seemed useless to meddle with him.

Had Trevor obeyed his first impulse—entered the place and, shaking the man into consciousness, compelled his return to the dockyard—a life which England could ill afford to lose might not have been snuffed out at its zenith.

There was everything of common-sense against such an action—nothing in the least suspicious about Garraway—yet the intuition was there, dormant, in His Lordship's mind—the infinitessimal chance granted by fate. And common-sense prevailed—as it was probably written that it *would* prevail.

At the lower end of Tate Street an enormous gas-tank, with a smaller one alongside, shut out the view of the river from that point. Trevor had not realized, until he stood looking directly up at them, the colossal size of the larger one or the probable height of its framework from the ground-level. Between it and the chemical works there was a petroleum-soaked field extending to the water bulkhead. Crossing the railway line, he walked over this to the river—noticing that a five-foot sewer emptied into the Thames in a line with Tate Street, and that a refuse-drain from the big gas-tank evidently had been con-

nected with it, judging by the faint indications of an old excavation which still remained across the middle of the field. Finally, as he had discovered no fresh evidence on that side of the river, His Lordship returned to the dockyard.

Meanwhile the ex-pugilist who served as barman in the pub had noticed Garraway's condition. With the help of another man, he carried the warrant-officer back through a narrow passage and down to a furnished cellar which extended under the yard at the back of the building. It was such an action as one may see in the low groggeries of a great city any day in the year—and aroused not the slightest comment from the half-dozen men who were drinking in the bar at the time. It was merely lugging a regular patron to a private room where he could sleep off his drunk—or possibly from where he might be shanghaied aboard some outgoing steamer. They neither knew nor cared.

But when the massive door of the cellar bedroom was closed after the barman, Garraway sat up on the bed, perfectly sober—drawing from his pocket a soiled and gummy wad of paper which he proceeded to straighten out. Upon it was penciled:

*"Herbert, David and party have decided to start on their yachting trip from the North of Scotland, June 5th. The change will do us all good, and I hope you will feel like joining the party. I think there will be no trouble about obtaining 'leave' for you—possibly we can have you ordered upon a scouting detail aboard the yacht 'Hampshire.'"*

Rolling aside a massive wardrobe that stood against one of the walls, reaching almost to the ceiling, he

opened a door which had been concealed behind it, walked through another passage—and stepped into a subterranean room which had been fitted up as a secret wireless-station. A man was seated at the operating-table with receivers clamped over his ears—listening intently. But as Garraway came in, he took off the head-frame and whirled around in his swivel-chair.

"*Ach! Mein lieber Von—er*—Garraway! Soh! You have something fresh to communicate? Yes?"

"I should say I had! But first—tell me, Karl! Are you taking the chance of *sending* anything at this time of day?"

"*Nein! Nein!* Though, if it wass necessary, I would! Look you—those fools across the river at Woolwich, they use always the two-thousand-metre wave, because they know that all calls for their station will be sent at that length. Of course—*ja!*—of course—maybe six or ten times every day they made adjustment of t'e *audion* to listen for other wave-lengths for a minute. But they pay no attention. I haf lissen too often mit them. So, if when they just stop talking with someone I begin sending at twenty-five hundredt—or twelve hundredt—they would notice nothing, even though we are here almost alongside of them. But meinself—I wait until they take their tea—with the receivers off their ears—at five o'clock. Now, tell, me, *mein Graf, wass iss?*"

"Secret service for me, I think. That girl Violet beats the devil! How she manages to pick up what she does, I can't imagine—but her information has been right every time. She says it has been decided that Kitchener, Lloyd-George, and 'K's' staff are to leave one of the ports in the

extreme north of Scotland, June 5th, on the cruiser *Hampshire!* They're going up to Archangel, and then to Petrograd. Conference on the summer campaign, of course. Violet says she can get me detailed to the *Hampshire*—but if not, I'll have twenty-four hours' notice and will manage to sneak aboard, up there, on some excuse or other. Cruiser will be coaling, anyhow; I can stow away as one of the coal-passers from the scow alongside."

"Soh! Undt when that cruiser goes mit Davy Jones, you are prepared to go mit her, *mein Graf?*"

"Oh, I must take my chance, of course. But I've won five medals for long-distance swimming, and I'll wear a rubber vest which I can inflate after I'm in the water. I'll get to the magazine before we're too far from land—you may be quite sure of that!"

Leaving certain instructions with the commandant at Woolwich, Lord Trevor and Captain Marshall motored back to the West End, reaching Park Lane by five o'clock. In spite of the most careful investigation, they couldn't see how it was possible for the Brussels message to have been sent from the Dockyard wireless station unless one or both of the quartermasters in charge were traitors—and His Lordship wouldn't even consider this, as yet. There was a vague impression growing in his mind that the solution of the mystery lay in a different locality—but he could find no clue to follow up.

The menace, however, appeared so dangerous to him that he determined to risk a personal investigation across the Channel. Telephoning his *mécanicien* and companion in many flights, at *Trevor Hall* in Devonshire, he ordered him to start at once with their largest cruising biplane—

capable of remaining in the air sixty hours, with four men and a machine-gun—and come down in Hyde Park, opposite his town residence.

At ten that evening a typical German officer, with full, round face and upturned blond moustache, drove out of Lord Trevor's grounds in a touring car with Sir Edward Wray—whose presence alone prevented the German's arrest by the Park police as they turned into the Ring from Marble Arch and walked across the turf to a ghostly biplane which lay there like a gigantic bat. It was assumed that if the Foreign Minister vouched for an officer in the gray-green of the German army, that obnoxious individual must be certainly a *Downing Street* man in disguise.

Silently—thanks to a muffler patented by His Lordship—the great aeroplane soared up over the roofs of London and disappeared, flying east at a 90-mile clip. Six hours later it flew over Cuxhaven—the estuary of the Elbe—and the length of the Kiel Canal, at an altitude of two hundred metres. Fortunately the air was so clear that, with his prism binoculars, Trevor could distinctly make out every ship, steamer, or war-craft below them—and, as the noise from the exhaust was entirely silenced by the wonderful muffler, their presence was unnoticed except when lights from below were reflected from the wings of the biplane. Then—they disappeared so quickly that the few scattering shots missed by a quarter of a mile.

It had been assumed at the Admiralty that practically all of the German high seas fleet was lying in the Canal, ready to steam out into the Baltic or the North Sea, wherever the battleships might be used with safety and advantage—in fact, that it had been lying there for nearly a year, more

or less intact. But, to His Lordship's amazement, he could see only five of the smallest cruisers below him. Flying over the Kiel dockyards, he made out the dim shapes of two superdreadnoughts about half completed, under immense gantries. In the harbor were two small cruisers and a few torpedo-boats—also what appeared to be a couple of submarines, flush with the sea.

The mysterious absence of the main fleet was beginning to have a sinister appearance. If not in the Canal or at Kiel, where was it? For the next two hours Trevor flew back and forth over the Danish Islands and the Cattegat—until, just at daybreak, he sighted a great flotilla clustered in Jammer Bay off the north coast of Denmark and well inshore. Flying close enough to make out the various units and count them—the great superdreadnoughts *Hindenburg*, *Dresden*, and three others of the same class, with a number of lesser battleships and cruisers, surrounded by torpedo and submarine squadrons—they whirled the biplane about before they were clearly seen and headed for London on the wings of a northeast wind that gave them something over a hundred miles an hour.

It was nearly one in the afternoon when Trevor—who had managed to change from the German uniform into British khaki and soak off the blond moustache—came down again in Hyde Park. In the house he found Sir Francis Lammerford with Lady Nan—spending a part of the afternoon in the hope that some message would come in from the two aviators in case their daring flight over the German naval base had proved successful. Without even waiting to change his clothes, Trevor at once took them down with

him to the wireless cellar and connected a couple of spare head-frames in order that they might listen-in.

"If I can't solve the mystery of that Woolwich message within an hour or two, we're facin' a serious risk. The entire German high seas fleet is hiding up off the north coast of Denmark—with what appear to be a dozen ocean raiders behind them! I fawncy the idea is to come out in force, engage our light-cruiser squadron an' keep 'em busy while those raiders sneak out to sea an' scatter all over the world! If I'd had pontoons under the 'plane, I should have risked bein' shot an' come down in the middle of Jellicoe's main battle-fleet—but we'd have been drowned or blown to atoms before there would have been any chance to explain, d'ye see! As it is, I should be gettin' Jellicoe by wireless this very instant—an' sendin' him up to the Skager-Rack as fast as ever he can steam there! But if I do so, the bounders who are playin' tricks on us at Woolwich are sure to catch the message—de-code it—an' warn the German fleet before Hood an' Beatty can get reinforcements. If by any unimaginable luck I could stumble upon some clue to that mystery down the river——"

He had been adjusting the receivers over his ears as he spoke—and suddenly his figure stiffened into alertness. Some operator within a near-by radius was calling *B-X-B—B-X-B—B-X-B*, the number of the Brussels station. Carefully, but as rapidly as his unfamiliarity with the instruments permitted, His Lordship manipulated the switches and set-screws of Meredith's *detector* while Sir Francis took down the message. Figuring the result from the compass and dial-indicators, he made the location exactly twenty-three miles—E. ¾ S.—which indicated

Woolwich on the map, without a chance of mistake. When Lammerford had written out the message and deciphered it from the *Wilhelmstrasse* code, it read:

> "*Light cruiser squadron now in mouth of Skager-Rack. Main battle-fleet twelve hours away, at best steaming, and gradually moving south. Attack in four or five hours.*"

Trevor snatched up one of the telephones and called the Admiralty, over his private wire, asking the operator to put him on to the Commandant's private telephone at Woolwich.

"Are you there, Admir'l? Are you there! Ah! Tell me at once, if you please, just what messages have been sent from your wireless-station within the lawst twenty minutes!"

In less than three moments the answer came:

"Last message sent was at one-fifteen, Your Lordship! Merely final instructions to one of our cruisers off Ushant. Leftenant Baylis has been in the operating room since eight-bells with Munn and Wilkins. I've just spoken with him over the telephone, and he gives me this report."

"Thank you very much, Admir'l! Er—I say—could you send a detail, fully armed, across the ferry, an' have them meet me at the corner of Leonard Street an' North Woolwich Road in possibly three-quarters of an hour? You'll do so? Er—thanks! Have two of the men fetch their hip-boots an' oilskins! I'll run down at once. ('Lammy,' just push the button on that emergency-wire for one of the eight-cylinder tourin' cars, will you? Then it'll be ready to start by the time we get up in the hall!)"

"What's the idea, old chap?"

"I haven't it entirely worked out—yet! But I fancy we'll get the solution of the mystery in North Woolwich, directly across the Thames from the wireless-station. There's one thing positive! This message was *not* sent from the Navy station. I had the ground all turned up around the bases of the skeleton-masts an' the shack which houses the wireless plant—no trace of any wire connections, an' nobody was at the key when this lawst message was sent. Now the distance across the river is so short that even this instrument of Meredith's wouldn't detect the difference, twenty-three miles away. Anything sent from North Woolwich undoubtedly works out with this *detector* the same as the Dockyard——"

"But—er—why there any more than somewhere in the town of Woolwich itself, outside of the Dockyard an' Arsenal?"

"Well, it's merely a hunch, of course, as the Americans say. But, d'rectly across the river from the Dockyard is one of the largest gas-tanks in East London—the supportin' framework must be nearly two hundred feet high. A hundred and fifty feet east of it there's a five-foot sewer, under open ground on a line with Tate Street, which empties into the Thames. An' some time within a couple of years, a smaller connection has been laid between that gas-tank an' the big sewer—possibly to drain off petroleum refuse. There are chimneys in the neighborhood, plenty of them, but I could see nothin' within a mile radius as high as that tank, exceptin' only the Dockyard wireless-masts. It presents possibilities which nothin' else does. Come along! We've not a moment to lose!"

They found twenty sailors waiting for them under the command of a midshipman three blocks west of the gas-tank. On the way down, Trevor had remembered the artificer, Garraway, drunk in the Tate Street pub—and had been speculating upon the general appearance of the place. It stood within a few feet of the sewer—a vague suspicion concerning it had been growing in his mind. So he ordered ten of the sailors around into Tate Street from the north—telling them to stand on the sidewalk outside and send in two or three men at a time to buy drinks, as if they were merely awaiting orders and had no suspicion of the place. The men with oilskins and rubber boots he ordered across the open field to the river bulkhead and told them to wade up inside of the five-foot sewer—searching with electric torches for heavily insulated wires along the west side of the culvert. The rest he posted in North Woolwich Road, near the corner of Tate Street.

In half an hour the men who had been searching the sewer came up to report that they had found two wires resembling, in size, the trunk feeders of a trolley-line—coming out of a twelve-inch pipe opposite the big gas-tank and disappearing through a hole in the west side of the culvert eight hundred feet from the river. They had paced the distance across the open field and estimated the spot to be, approximately, where the sailors were standing—outside the pub.

That was enough. The saloon was suddenly raided and wires found in the cellar leading back to the underground operating-room—where the man Karl and two accomplices were taken after a desperate resistance, during which one of the sailors was killed and three others

badly wounded. The spies and the barman were taken out to the open field—stood upon the river bulkhead—and summarily shot, in the presence of several hundred spectators who lined Factory Road. Examination of the big gas-tank showed the connections to have been made with heavy copper wires inside the hollow steel columns which upheld the towering framework.

As the spies were being executed, Trevor was in the Dockyard wireless station, persistently calling the flagship of Admiral Jellicoe's fleet until she answered—and urging the Admiral to hurry toward the Skager-Rack as fast as he could steam. That the warning came too late to save a few of England's finest cruisers and nearly seven thousand sailor-heroes was due to the unfortunate combination of circumstances—but the delayed attack by the heavier units of the fleet resulted in the destruction of practically all the German raiders that had tried to sneak out, and the passage into the Baltic of five powerful English cruisers.

A week later a survivor of the cruiser *Hampshire*—desperately clinging to a fragment of the signal-spar, after seeing the heroic "K. of K." go down to his ocean tomb—noticed one of his messmates, an artificer, by name of Garraway, calmly inflating a rubber vest which kept him afloat without the slightest exertion. In a single flash of comprehension he recalled having seen the man go into the magazine, fifteen minutes before the explosion, to repair some rubber packing around the door—and realized what must have been in the kit-bag he carried. Knowing he was doomed never to reach the shore in that

heavy sea—which rolled him under the spar every few moments—he grinned with indomitable purpose at the scoundrel's life-preserving vest, and managed to draw his service automatic from its holster. The weapon spoke twice. Garraway threw up his arms, gasped, and rolled over face downward—the air whistling out of his bloody, punctured vest.

"Damn ye f'r a bloody, murderin' *boche*, Garraway! An' I 'opes ye'll find it so bally 'ot in 'ell, when ye gits below, that the blubber'll sizzle off'n yer bones—s'elp me! I'm a-goin', my own self, in a little while, Garraway—but I 'opes it'll be to the place where I can stand salutin' when Kitchener goes by with Gabriel an' 'Bobs'!"

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MYSTERIOUS CAMP IN THE PYRENEES

THE entertainment at *Stalton House* in aid of the allied Field Hospitals included dancing in the stately old Tudor ballroom, with "bridge" in the smaller rooms at either side. Among those on the floor, Lord and Lady Trevor had been attracting attention by their perfect dancing of an intricate variation in the Argentine tango—but they were by no means the only celebrities who had temporarily deserted the card-tables for the fascination of rhythmic motion. Statesmen, Cabinet Ministers, foreign diplomats—of all ages and sizes—danced with an absorption that was rather amazing, considering their every-day activities.

A man who had been watching the dancers from a seat behind one of the pillars seemed particularly interested in the military attaché of the Spanish Embassy, Major Don Julio Zacata—who was chatting behind a group of potted palms with the Honorable Chudleigh Sammis, M. P. They were discussing the arrival, that morning, of a German submarine at Baltimore—and the keen-faced American who sat behind the pillar had an impression that the Member of Parliament concurred rather strongly, for a loyal Englishman, with the Spaniard's open admiration of the exploit. The submarine had been lucky—no question as to that—but as a feat of seamanship, her perform-

ance was no more remarkable than the crossing of the Atlantic, some months previously, by the five American submarines built at the Fore River yards for England, or that of the English submarines which penetrated the Sea of Marmora after the passage through the Mediterranean and the thickly mined Dardanelles. It was by no means sure, at that moment, that the German submarine would return safely to Bremen. The American was trying to puzzle out some underlying reason for Sammis's affability to the Spanish attaché when Lady Trevor caught a glimpse of his face, in passing, and promptly fetched His Lordship around behind the pillar.

"*Raymond Carter!* Where in the world did *you* drop from? We heard that you'd left the American Embassy in Paris four months ago, for a well-earned vacation—but there was no word of you from any one in the States! Did you really go home at all?" He was still holding her hand with one of his and looking at her delightedly as he extended the other to His Lordship.

"Why should I? This thing over here is too stupendous to leave—and some of its most interesting features are not on the firing-line. For instance—your Member of Parliament, yonder, appears to have some pretty good reason for cultivating Major Don Julio Zacata, who is —*entre nous*—of the Hapsburgs. Oh, he's Spanish-born, all right, and a duly accredited attaché of the Spanish Embassy—but I'll bet a good yellow double eagle that his sympathies are not with England and France in this row! Not by a thousand miles! You could have him recalled upon excellent grounds—but of course you won't. Because he also happens to be a distant connection of Al-

fonso himself, and you don't want to get that bright young man down on you!"

Lady Nan, glancing round the big hall, noticed that some of the people were observing their meeting with Carter—marking him as an old friend of two celebrities who were known in nearly every quarter of the globe.

"See here, Raymond! Evidently you've been procuring information of value to us—somewhere! If we stand talking here another five minutes there may be people in the house who will suspect the fact. Better go to your club now—and afterward come around to Park Lane."

"H-m-m—is there one of your high-powered motors outside, Lady Nan?"

"Yes. We've grown so accustomed to the unexpected that we never use anything else, now—even for social affairs. In fact, we've disposed of every car that isn't capable of doing ninety miles at a pinch. Ranjeet Singh is waiting outside—we are leaving in half an hour. *Two-five-five* is our carriage number."

"I'll spot Ranjeet without calling the number and get into the car with my collar turned up—first telephoning Park Lane to send another for Your Ladyship—same carriage number. Then, if Trevor will come out in a few moments and meet me, two blocks up the street, we can watch for that Spaniard when he leaves. Unless I'm guessing wrong altogether, your Member of Parliament will be with him—and they'll drive off in a car, somewhere, for a private conference. Now—do we understand each other? Good! I'll try to create an impression that our acquaintance is merely casual."

If any secret agent of Germany was at *Stalton House* that night—and the Foreign Office assumed this to be highly probable—he undoubtedly contented himself with a close observation of Lady Nan, figuring that secret agents of the British Government were likely to be among the numerous acquaintances with whom she talked at various times. If Lord Trevor's departure was noticed at all, it was assumed that he had left early for a game of cards at his club or had possibly gone to the Admiralty—being one of the most popular Admirals in the service. Carter may have been recognized as having had some former connection with the American Embassy in Paris—but he was one of those artists among diplomats who possess the ability to present such an average appearance as to be easily confused with hundreds of other men of the same complexion, height, build, dress, and manner. It was raining when he left the house, so his stepping into the Trevor landaulet and driving off up the street attracted no attention. His Lordship came out with the collar of his mackintosh turned above his ears and his Fedora hat-brim pulled down until they made an effectual disguise. When Major Zacata appeared with the Hon. Chudleigh Sammis, fifteen minutes later, Trevor's motor was drawn up near by, and it glided silently after their car, half a block in the rear.

As Carter had anticipated, the attaché had no intention of going back to the Spanish Embassy in Grosvenor Gardens. Instead of heading west, his chauffeur cut down through St. James's Square and Whitehall to Westminster Bridge, then south into Surrey, along Brixton Road, through Croyden. As the car was starting up the

grade to Nore Hill and the Woldingham Downs, the brilliant glare of an acetylene lamp was turned full upon it from the side of the road, and a figure in khaki stepped out to cover the chauffeur with a levelled magazine rifle. When he stopped, Major Zacata leaned out to ask what the trouble was. The sergeant was polite but firm.

"You'll have to account for yourselves, gentlemen!"

"*Si! Si!* I am Military Attaché of the Spanish Embassy—an' my frien', he ees Honorable Señor Sammis, the Member of your Parliament! We proceed to the villa where we are guest', near Woldingham!"

"Er—quite so! I should have recognized you at once! I'm Kaiser Bill, myself, don't you know! Might as well stow all that, an' turn up whatever identification you happen to have about you!"

Zacata was furious, but instantly drew a card case from his pocket as Sammis was producing his own.

"My card! You may also examine my chauffeur's license if you weesh!"

The cards and other papers being apparently satisfactory, the sergeant returned them with a salute.

"These seem to be sufficient, sir; you may proceed! But, if convenient, it would be advisable to do your motoring during the day—any one not connected with the Army is quite sure to be stopped."

Ranjeet Singh had seen what happened in time to throw out his clutch at some little distance back from the pickets, but Zacata had gone scarcely a hundred yards when His Lordship leaned out of the landaulet in the glare of the acetylene lamp, with his hat off, and said, in a low voice:

"*On His Majesty's Service*, Sergeant! Don't delay us!"

The man recognized his face as exceedingly familiar; the air of command was unmistakable. He was saluting, a little doubtfully, when His Lordship continued, rapidly:

"You've been in this neighborhood several days? Aye? Have you heard of any villa or manor house which has been recently leased to someone in London—either a Member of Parliament or a foreigner?"

"Yes, sir. That's why I allowed that other car to proceed. There's an old house on the top of Woldingham Hill, a mile away from any other one—you reach it by a lane from the turnpike, before it dips down to Titsey. It has the reputation of being haunted—vacant for several years, they say, around here. But a gentleman from London took it during the winter an' spent a good bit of tin putting it in repair. Comes down for the week-ends. Butler and old housekeeper appear to be in charge when he's away."

Thanking him courteously, Trevor settled back in his seat, and Ranjeet took the hill on "high." The brief conversation had taken but a minute—yet the other car was out of sight in the rain and darkness. On the higher ground, Ranjeet turned up his lamps, and all three closely examined the earth at the side of the macadam as they ran along. Presently they passed a spot where tyre-marks in the soft clay showed where a car had turned into an opening through the hedge so narrow that the twigs must have brushed the mud-guards as it went through. Turning off his lights, Ranjeet drew up at the side of the road, a little further along; after which Lord Trevor and the American walked rapidly back to the narrow lane.

After proceeding cautiously for a mile, they came upon a manor house nestling in waist-high gorse on the crest of the Downs. There were lights in two windows upon the ground floor and one at the rear, evidently in the kitchen or butler's pantry. Feeling sure that somebody would have been told to watch the lane, they cautiously circled the place, in the gorse, at a distance of five hundred feet, and approached it from the west. In the darkness they stumbled against something which proved to be a flag-pole—considerably over a hundred feet high, judging by the thickness of the lower mast.

"Hmph! The beauty of the flag-pole idea, Raymond, is that one can never be sure it isn't always used, quite innocently, for the Union Jack or Red Ensign—when the master of the house is in residence—until he makes a most searchin' investigation. I fawncy three-quarters of the country houses in the British Isles have, each, their flag-mast! If one were to examine all of them, it would take some doing—what? Search about, carefully, within a hundred-foot radius, an' see if you cawn't locate a well, or a partly sunken ice-house—something of the sort!"

In a few moments they came upon the wooden hatch of a cistern—evidently piped to collect rain-water from the roofs of the manor house. Removing the hatch and flashing a ray from an electric torch down inside, they saw that the top of the water was about seven feet below the ground-level, and that what appeared to be a drain—three feet in diameter—opened from the bricks, at one side, directly under the hatch, about two feet above the water. Lowering himself until he could throw his light into this drain, Trevor saw a reel of copper "aërials"

twenty feet back from the cistern—plenty long enough to be hoisted to the top of the pole by the flag-halyards—and he had barely shut off his own light when he saw a reflection at the other end of the drain three hundred feet away. To swing himself out of the cistern and replace the hatch was the work of but a few seconds.

"Faith, they're comin' through that drain at this moment, old chap, to string up those aërials an' begin sending. We'd best make a detour through the gorse an' see if we cawn't get in close to those lighted windows at the side!"

The narrow spaces between the Tudor mullions of the windows were fitted with diamond-shaped panes, the lower section opening outward upon hinges and being partly overgrown with ivy. This gave the watchers an excellent opportunity to peer through the leaves without being seen. The room proved to be a spacious library with a low, raftered ceiling and a beautifully carved stone fireplace at one side. Sammis and the Spanish attaché were smoking comfortably in big leather chairs at one side of a massive centre table. Near them a handsome woman was half reclining on a divan, playing with the long ears of a dachshund. Trevor and the American Chargé d'Affaires muttered exclamations at the sight of her.

"Lady Violet Penngwylder, by Jove! Who is also *Condesa de Saltaluna* by reason of her inherited Spanish estates! There's been a good bit of talk about her carelessness in regard to appearances, you know! A handsome widow cawn't go about, openly, with a foreigner—or any one else, for that matter—without stirrin' up gossip! Well, we've ample time to discuss her later. Just

LORD TREVOR

"HANDING RAYMOND CARTER ONE OF THE RECEIVERS, HE PLACED THE OTHER AGAINST HIS OWN EAR . . . THE VOICES IN THE ROOM WERE AS DISTINCT AS IF THEY HAD BEEN WITHIN SIX FEET OF THE SPEAKERS"

now, we've to hear what they're sayin', if possible! We cawn't pry open one of these windows without makin' a noise they'll hear, but I carry a couple of *dictaphones* in any car I happen to be usin'—so we'll not do so badly in spite of that. Glass vibrates even more than a metal diaphragm, under certain conditions."

He took from his mackintosh pocket a compact dictaphone transmitter from which he unscrewed the protecting rubber mouthpiece—holding the diaphragm flat against one of the window-panes. Then, handing Carter one of the receivers, he placed the other against his own ear, and the tones of the voices in the room were as distinct as if they had been within six feet of the speakers. Sammis had evidently been asking for certain information which the Major was giving him, Lady Violet supplementing it with an occasional remark.

"You ask, my frien', how many of ze men we expec' to 'ave before we bring off ze grran' coup? We 'ave now thirty thousan'. They are scatter' in many pueblos an' cities where nobody notice' them. To-morrow, othair steamer' weel arrive—ten thousan' more men—who weel scatter as ze othairs. In a few days there weel be in Spain forty thousan' men of German birth—mos' of whom 'ave live' so long in Latin country' that t'ey pass for Spanish or Italian, mos' certainly. In our own organization—w'ich comprise many of ze brigand', we 'ave twenty thousan'. Seexty thousan' ees not beeg army—ver' true—but eet will be sufficient for ze surprise an' ze compromise. For to move them, we 'ave more as t'ree hundred box-cars—an' there ees leetle station, ver' quieet, w'ere ze seexty thousan' can be load' in one day. We 'ave

secret agent' in every station along ze line to cut ze telegraph before we start, an' coöperate with us in taking ze railway buildings."

"Suppose the big strike isn't settled by the time you want to move your men?"

"Look you, my frien'! zose striker' are mostly affiliate' weeth our organization. Ze strrike, he weel not be settle' until we are ready to move! Observe! Ze railway, he ees all tie'-up—everywhere—nozzing ees move' in ze way of trrain'. Ze line clear—nozzing in ze way w'en we weesh to run express after express of ze box-car! Ze people beyond ze frontier, they t'ink our strike ees all settle', an' that we move ze goods-train' w'ich 'ave been wait' so long."

"And the Condesa? Where does she come in?"

Lady Violet stretched herself like a lazy cat, smiling.

"I throw a little snuff in the eyes of His Majesty and the leaders in the Cortes. I was rather intimate with the Queen when she was Princess Victoria of Battenberg, and used to get along beautifully with His Majesty. They invite me to visit them frequently. Well, I ask the King whether his country is prepared, in case it happens to become involved in the war. He assures me there is no possibility of such an eventuality—but I tell him a few things I've heard, and suggest the advisability of stocking-up on munitions, at least. Whether he actually orders the War Department to increase the munitions reserve or not, he is bound to see that there really should be a large stock in the country. So, if he learns that a few public-spirited business men among his subjects have made large purchases abroad, in that line, he is more

likely to thank and decorate them than to suspect any ulterior motive. Meanwhile, I keep telling him certain confidential gossip I've picked up in regard to the intentions of the *Entente* toward him in the near future. He doesn't believe it—yet—but he is doing a good bit of thinking, and will be getting more suspicious of the Allies as the months pass. If he happens to hear that certain officers in the War Department have been exceeding their authority, he will not be disposed to investigate too closely."

"Excellent, Condesa! Capital! One can scarcely overestimate the value of such work inside the Palacio Real!"

The conversation drifted to less serious matters—and the listeners, outside, thought it advisable to make their escape before any of the household came prowling about. When they were in the landaulet, racing back to London, Carter expected that His Lordship would at once order the arrest of Sammis and the recall of Zacata.

"No; we don't want to stir up their Embassy and strain diplomatic relations between the two countries. You may be quite sure that house was never leased in Zacata's name, or Sammis's, either—not with the chance of that wireless outfit bein' discovered on the place! We'll wait until those three have gone back to London, and then seize the place with everyone who happens to be in it at the time. For six months we've known Sammis to be a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy, an' have been watchin' him, d'ye see—which has enabled us to make several rather important arrests. I fancy he's no suspicion of the extent to which he has been constantly under espionage. We'll permit him an' Zacata an' the Condesa to imagine thei

connection with this house, down here, hasn't been traced at all—an' that we've taken it over because we somehow located the wireless messages from it. I'm beginnin' to have some inkling as to what may be doin' in Spain—but you can probably fill in a few gaps! What did you discover there?"

"You're familiar, of course, with the various services of the big Spanish steamship line—the *Compañia Trasatlantica*—and know there are smaller ones more or less affiliated with it? Well, for the last three months irregular chartered steamers, running in some of those lines, have been fetching men from South and Central America to work newly developed mines and other industries in various parts of Spain. They talk Spanish as if it were their native tongue—even some of the local dialects—but I'd be willing to bet that every one of them is either Austrian or German formerly engaged in developing the foreign trade of those countries. Probably few, if any, not in the secret, have noticed that all of them were landed at Barcelona. Some are undoubtedly still in that city—but the majority left almost immediately on trains going north, into the interior. One of our Secret Service men happened to be in Barcelona on another matter, and was just curious enough to keep tally on the rather unusual immigration proposition. He told me that, in two months, over thirty thousand men had come to Barcelona by steamer. Not immigrant families, mind you, but able-bodied men, none over forty-five! He also put me on to another thing which'll bear examination. The two largest arm and ammunition houses in Barcelona, with branches in Toledo, Madrid, and Seville, have been importing ship-

load after shipload from the United States, Chile, and Argentina——"

"My word! I rather imagine that's where we overlooked a bet! One doesn't think of munition factories in the South American States, but there should be more of 'em in Chile than any place in the world, because of the immense nitrate deposits there. An' there's metal enough in Argentina to supply a hundred diff'rent works. Er, what have those comp'nies done with the stuff they've imported?"

"Stored part of the shipments in their own warehouses, shipped the bulk of them to some place in the north of Spain. Of course, nothing has been transported inland since the railway strike began, but there are spur-tracks to each of the warehouses; train after train could be loaded and sent away at an hour's notice."

"Anything else you picked up down there?"

"Yes; but I can't see where it has anything to do with this proposition, unless——"

"Aye—unless? What?"

"Unless the Quartermaster General of the Spanish Army, and a number of his subordinates, happen to be in the conspiracy!"

"Know anything about him? Is he connected with one of the Austro-Spanish families?"

"By Jove! I didn't think of that! Yes! Austrian connections straight back—even his mother was an Austrian countess! And of course, he could easily recommend for promotion other Austro-Spaniards, under him, in his department!"

"But—what's the point? What has he done?"

"He would naturally have the placing of contracts for new army uniforms, wouldn't he? Of course! And if he could get them supplied from the United States more reasonably than they could be made in Spain, it would be a nice little rake-off for him, wouldn't it? With the amount of graft all through the Spanish Government, nobody would pay any attention to the importation of more uniforms than the army could possibly need for the next year—eh? Well, the bald fact is that over seventy thousand uniforms, all grades, and all branches of the service, have been imported from the United States and stored at the regular Government depots of the Q. M. D."

"Are you sure that none of *them* has been shipped to some place in the north of Spain?"

"That never occurred to me! But there'd be nothing to prevent the Q. M. D. cars being shunted at some junction outside of Barcelona and sent north. I don't just see——"

"What that crowd want of Spanish uniforms? Hmph! I fancy *I do !* I say, Raymond! This affair is a good bit too serious to overlook! If it were left to Alfonso an' the cooler-headed leaders in the Cortes, there'd be not the slightest danger in the world of their bein' dragged into this war! They know that Spain is exposed to hostile attack on every side, an' that the *Entente* navies could bottle them up—tight—inside of three days. Spain has everything to lose an' nothin' in the world to gain by meddlin' in this——"

"Unless——"

"What?"

"Unless the propagandists have lied so convincingly,

all through Spain, that the people really believe the Central Powers are bound to win the war and impose their peace terms upon all Europe! In that case, a little material assistance at the psychological moment would be handsomely rewarded in the final settlement—or rather, the Spaniards would be made to *believe* that it would. Take the case of Bulgaria. Nothing could have been more treacherous and short-sighted than Ferdinand's throwing in with the Germans when he did. He hasn't as yet a realization of what is coming to him in the wind-up—thinks it was a *coup d'état* which is to make him one of the powers of Europe. But in a few months he'll begin to think differently—his people are beginning to wake up, even now. On the present status, however, he constitutes a pretty good argum'nt for the propagandists in Spain. They've watched the opening-up of the *Oriental Railway* to Stamboul—the joining of the Turkish, Bulgarian, and German armies. It *looks* as if Bulgaria would get a very satisfactory slice of the pie, and become more powerful. If Spain could render a similar service and get some of the pie for herself—probably the whole of Portugal, at least—the decision to help Austria and Germany would be very popular throughout the peninsula!"

"With a good many, aye! But I fancy a majority of the people love England an' France much better than they do the Teutons. First place, they're a Latin race. When Charles the First—in his minority—made that famous pilgrimage with the Duke of Buckingham, incognito, to visit the Infanta and the Spanish Court, it appealed to the streak of romance in every Spaniard's heart. It's one of the great traditions in Spain to this day. And

King Edward, when he also was *El Principe de Gales*, did a good deal to perpetuate it. He was immensely popular down there. Then again, Queen Victoria Eugenie has made herself loved by the whole nation; and she's an English princess. Alfonso is still in love with her; he himself is one of the best-liked rulers the country ever had. He is of Austrian blood, but he has dev'lish little use for Germany or Hohenzollern ideas. There's one point upon which you may wager a good bit: whatever Alfonso does, he'll have the bulk of his people behind him. Raymond, I'm goin' around to Cap Cerbere on the *Ranee*, with my biggest cruisin' biplane aboard! I'll have no difficulty in gettin' permission from the French War Office to do all the scoutin' I please along the Pyrenees; in fact, they all recognize the value of my services, an' give me *carte blanche*. If you care to come along, you'll get a bit of excitement, I fancy; but don't blink the possibility that we may neither of us come back!"

There was a conference in Park Lane, that night, between Lord Trevor, the *Foreign Secretary* and Sir Francis Lammerford, at which the facts picked up at the manor on Woldingham Downs were thoroughly discussed, and arrangements made to keep the Spanish Embassy attachés under close surveillance. Then His Lordship and Raymond Carter motored down to Southampton, where H. M. Scout Cruiser, *S-49*—formerly the deep-sea yacht *Ranee Sylvia*—lay waiting for them with steam up. Upon the second morning following, she passed Gibraltar, and by midnight was off the boundary between France and Spain. Trevor had been somewhat undecided as to

where he might expect to find concrete evidence of the plot, but he now got out a set of the *Ministére de la Guerre* topographic maps and sat down with Carter in his private saloon, aft, to discuss the question.

"The 'special detail' from the War Departm'nt which was handed to me by the captain of that thirty-knot French destroyer, this morning, permits me to do practically whatever I please anywhere in French territory and authorizes me to demand assistance, if I need it, from local forces. But I fancy they've no idea as to what we're up to. Now, I'm almost positive that we'll find what we're lookin' for at this end of the Pyrenees rather than the other——"

"Why so? What's your argument?"

"An expedition by way of San Sebastian would have merely Bordeaux for its objective. It is doubtful if fifty or sixty thousand men could take and hold the city even with the advantage of a partial surprise—but they simply couldn't get there without some warning of their approach, and if they did, they'd merely stop the commerce entering France through that port, which would be immediately diverted elsewhere. But on *this* end, the mountain boundary comes right out into the Mediterranean, with low land to the north and south of it. In goin' around Cap Cerbere, the railway line actually has to tunnel under promontories in three places, and on the Spanish side there's nothin' but the little pueblo of San Miguel de Culera within eight or ten miles of the border. The place has no communication except by mule-trails, aside from the railway. Back of it are almost inaccessible mountain valleys with altitudes of fifteen hundred to

twenty-five hundred feet. Zacata said he had German spies in all the French railway stations for some distance north of the border—evidently enough of them to cut telegraph wires and take possession of the railway yards until a battalion could be dropped from the trains at each place. So it won't do for the *Ranee* to be seen at any of the little ports along the shore——"

"Hold on a second! You think this expedition will be aimed at *Marseilles*—is that it?"

"Not Marseilles itself, because assistance could be obtained too quickly from the naval depot at Toulon. But if they could hold Narbonne, Nîmes, and Tarascon, they would cut all communication between Marseilles and the rest of France, tap the great artery which supplies troops, munitions, provisions from the Mediterranean, the Orient, and South America. Of course, the traffic *could* be switched to Genoa and go up through Mont Cenis. Equally, of course, no expedition of this size could hold those three connecting points for more than a few days or weeks at the outside—unless reinforced by the Spanish Army. But if the Cortes should suddenly vote to do that—and rush up troops in support—it would create a diversion that might easily change the whole outcome of the western campaign this year."

"Where can you take the *Ranee* in without being seen by some of those German spies?"

"One of the little indentations directly south of Cap l'Abeille. The railway goes under the mountain, you see, in a long tunnel, and there isn't even a fishing village within several miles of that cove. Looks to me as if it would be an ideal spot to start from in the 'plane."

"H-m-m—your reasoning is pretty convincing; perhaps you're on the right track. You figure, of course, that a German expedition must be camped in some hidden valley or ravine along the southern slope of the Pyrenees—but wouldn't such a camp be liable to discovery if it were located too near the Mediterranean, or the Bay of Biscay at either end?"

"More so than if it were in the middle of the high Pyrenees, of course, but they have no choice in the matter. There are but two railways from Spain into Europe: San Sebastian-Biarritz, on the west; Figueras-Perpignan, on the east. Between them, along the whole two hundred and fifty miles across the neck of the peninsula, there are but four roads crossing the high passes of the Pyrenees, and they are out of the question for infantry or field artillery. Charlemagne crossed merely the low foot-hills at the west end, only thirty-three miles from the Bay of Biscay; the famous pass of *Roncesvalles*, where Roland and his rear-guard held back the Moors, is but thirty-five hundred feet above sea-level. Hannibal crossed within twelve miles of the Mediterranean, at the east end where the summit of the pass was less than a thousand feet above sea level, though the peaks on either side were over three thousand. But this German expedition—to get moving as quickly as it must in order to have any chance whatever—can't be located more than a couple of hours' march from an entraining platform on the railway. They *might* use Hannibal's pass and come down upon the little single-track French railway at le Boulou, but it would be impossible for them to collect enough box-cars there without giving the whole affair away. At San

Miguel de Culera they can assemble all the cars they please —during this strike, while no trains are running—without its appearing to be anything more than congestion caused by the strike itself."

Two hours later H. B. M. *S-49* anchored in the secluded cove which had been picked out by His Lordship on the chart, and as soon as it was dark the big cruising biplane soared up from a runway that had been rigged between the mainmast and the stern. Following the little river and valley to the west of Cap l'Abeille, Trevor kept at sufficient altitude to see the stars over the crests of the mountains, rising to nine hundred meters and crossing the Pic du Col del Touro less than a hundred feet above its summit, but a good twenty-seven hundred feet above sea-level. Swinging E.S.E. along the crest—while Carter kept his prism-binoculars upon the black mass of the valleys and ravines below—he flew toward the Mediterranean. In less than two minutes, however, an exclamation from Carter made him swing the 'plane around in a circle.

"By Jove, old chap! There *is* a camp down there, as sure as fate! The fires have burned low—must have finished their dinner an hour ago—but I can make out the glow of the embers distinctly! The whole outfit is bunched within the space of a mile, up and down the ravine, and a third of a mile across, I should say! From the blackness, down there, I think the ridges are precipitous on each side of them—and the ravine twists like a letter *S* at the foot, so that nobody can see up into it from below!"

"Can you get any idea as to the number of fires?"

"Keep circling, and I'll try. Five—ten—fifteen—about thirty fires across the width of the ravine—and at least three times that many up and down."

"Say, roughly, three thousand little fires. If you figured only ten men to each fire, that would give you thirty thousand, but they are likely to average nearer twenty. The sun only gets into that ravine for a couple of hours each day; undoubtedly it's very cool at night. I'd say there must be forty or fifty thousand men there, at least—possibly sixty thousand. Look here, Raymond! I've got to know something more definite about that crowd! There are features concernin' that camp which appear quite impossible, don't you know. Can you make out anything which looks like a small patch of clear level ground?"

"Not here! Run down toward the coast a bit!" (In five minutes Carter made out something which looked like a cleared space through his glass.) "Over to the right! Easy! Circle around here, a little lower! That looks like bare ground—fairly level—at the mouth of a little valley! Drop a bit lower! Go down another hundred feet! Turn to the left, and come down in a straight run—against the wind!"

The ground was covered with small stones—interspersed with patches of ragged turf—but the stout rubber wheels sprang and bumped over it until the big 'plane came to a standstill. Hauling it in behind some evergreen trees at one side of the space, Trevor looked at the compass on his machine and started climbing the low ridge to the north. After an hour's tramping they came down into a ravine along the bottom of which ran—to their

great surprise—a narrow but fairly smooth macadam road, with a carefully surveyed gradient. As they stood looking at the faint streak which it made in the blackness of the ravine, they heard the exhaust of two motor-trucks approaching. In half a minute they rolled by, the lamps from the rear one showing up with startling distinctness the Spanish service uniforms of the troopers driving the first.

"My word! *This* is where all those American-made uniforms went to! Clever—deuced clever, don't you know! Faith, I'm beginning to see the whole thing now, Raymond! An' the worst of it is, there's far too good a chance of its succeedin' unless we can do something within the next two or three days!"

"You mean—they'll actually try to invade France in those uniforms!"

"Precisely! The whole affair is planned with a dev'lish lookin' out for details—no question as to that! What seemed impossible to me, when we discovered that big camp, was the feeding sixty thousand men without the whole proposition bein' discovered! I knew that, up to a few months ago, there was nothin' leadin' from San Miguel into the mountains but the roughest kind of donkey-trails. But the first lot of men they sent here undoubtedly built that macadam road through trees an' blind valleys where nobody would be likely to stumble upon it but mountaineers—an' they're prob'ly holdin' every one of 'em that comes along, d'ye see. Then that foxy Quartermaster General states in his report to His Majesty an' the Cortes that he has established a camp in this vicinity for summer manœuvres, accommodatin' three or four regiments at a

time. The uniforms make everything look regular to the people of San Miguel an' other towns in this locality. His commissary sends along a daily quota of food for the camp in milit'ry trains to San Miguel—run by the soldiers themselves, of course—an' from there to the camp by motor-trucks. In a country even more rotten with graft than the United States, who is goin' to ask any questions—make any investigation—as to whether he's feedin' ten thousand or fifty thousand men? German agents in America are shippin' the provisions an' munitions through Barcelona, of course. No food requisitions to arouse suspicion! The people along the line see the provision-trains go by—but they don't count the cars or know what's inside of 'em. Supposing there is a summer camp of the regular Spanish Army in the mountains, who is there at San Miguel to notice what a frightful lot of canned stuff an' other provisions is bein' transported in those motor-trucks?

"Then comes the crownin' use of the Spanish uniforms! Fifty thousand Spanish troops run up into France concealed in box-cars—train after train of 'em—an' seize the railway junctions—killing a lot of soldiers an' others who resist! How is Spain goin' to disavow such an act? An' keep out of the war, after that? The Trojan wooden horse all over again! It'll be another case of the *Goeben* an' *Breslau!* Turkey had no more idea of bein' drawn into this war than Spain has at this moment! Gad! If it were only possible to discover their magazine, up here—an' they fancy themselves too secure to put a guard about it? My word, Raymond! I mustn't drag you into this—but I mean to have a go at it if it's the lawst thing I do!"

With a forcible remark from Carter that he wasn't there as a tourist, they followed the motor-road—hiding in the bushes when any one approached—until they reached the hidden ravine. Cautiously scouting around it, they came down in the rear of a portable steel warehouse that proved to be the Quartermaster's supply-depot. The sergeant in charge was just locking up for the night when Trevor stepped in—saying that he had a requisition from the General in command of the camp. Suspecting nothing, the sergeant walked back to the rear of the big shack, where an acetylene lamp stood on his desk—as Carter shut and locked the door behind him. Before the fellow could make a noise His Lordship felled him with a single blow—then bound and gagged him. Taking up the lantern, they noiselessly examined the stock on the shelves—systematically arranged in various sizes and ranks—selecting the uniforms of a colonel and major of engineers. Then, making a bundle of their own clothes, they hid it among the low cedars at the back of the warehouse and started walking quite openly through the camp, having overheard the password given by one of the officers in charge of a truck as he passed the outer sentry.

In one of the tents four subalterns were playing pinochle by the light of a single lantern—all getting upon their feet and saluting as the supposed staff officers entered. Trevor addressed them gruffly, in German—but with a twinkle in his eye which softened the tone to some extent.

"Soh, Hauptman! You burn the light after taps—*ja!* Well—for the moment, we are not so strict—no! This being cooped up, here, is tiresome business! In a few days, now, it will be different—*ja!* You will allow me to in-

spect your revolver, please!" (The weapon was promptly handed to him—butt first—and proved to be loaded, in perfect condition.) "Excellent, Hauptman! And the men in your company—you have inspected their rifles and bandoliers, to-day?" (It was a chance shot—but Trevor had amazing luck in getting the information he wished by just such means.)

"*Ja, mein Oberst!* There are, of course, no cartridges—as you are aware, *mein Herr;* but they have been drilled in receiving and stowing them quickly, at the magazine."

"*Ja!* The order was given to avoid the possibility of accidental discharge which might attract attention over the passes. You will come outside, and estimate for me how quickly your company can reach the magazine from their tents, in the event that orders come unexpectedly!"

"*Ja, mein Oberst*—will you permit that I pace the distance at the regulation step and take the time, by my watch?"

"Do so! We will accompany you!"

This was almost unbelievable luck—and yet—the pseudo Colonel's questions had been quite what he might have been expected to ask.

The steel munition sheds were up a little side ravine that branched off from the main camp about half way, and opened out like an inverted V. From the piles of shells and cases of small-arm cartridges under the sheds Trevor estimated that all of the munitions imported from North and South America had been transported to the camp, ready for the departure of the expedition. When they had accompanied the captain back to his tent, they re-

turned—and walked up to the magazine as if they had business there. A single sentry was pacing back and forth in front of the nearest shed. Upon being asked where the munitions for the Engineer's battalion were stored, he pointed out a shed in the middle of the group, and saluted as they walked back to it by the occasional flash of an electric torch.

Under the Engineers' shed Trevor found what he was looking for—a lot of dynamite sticks, packed in sawdust, and coils of fuse. Making sure that intervening piles of shells concealed them from the sentry, they attached a length of fuse to a heavy stone and suspended it from one of the roof-beams. Tying on another length, two feet above the stone, they led it away outside of the shed, estimating that it would burn about fifteen minutes before it reached the knot and let the stone drop. Then they placed a dozen sticks of dynamite directly under the stone —and went back through the camp. Making their way among the cedars where they had left their clothes, they climbed the steep ridge, and were nearly at the top of it when a dull rumbling of the ground was succeeded by a roar and concussion which dislodged showers of loose rock from the precipitous sides of the main ravine and swept it from one end to the other.

They were thrown to the ground by the force of the explosion, but received nothing worse than superficial bruises. Below, in the ravine, there followed a few moments of deathly silence—then a confused murmur, punctuated with shrieks of mangled and dying men. Little points of light appeared, here and there, as officers ran about the camp with their lanterns to ascertain the extent of the

disaster. The shouts of a commanding officer came distinctly up to them as he gave rapid orders to throw out pickets in every direction and arrest everyone leaving or approaching the ravine.

"Faith, Raymond—if we're caught, it's all over with us! We'd best get away from here on the jump—an' without makin' any noise, at that!"

They had marked the place where they first came upon the macadam road by a large boulder, but it was now out of the question to go down in that direction and look for it; so they were forced to get their bearings as best they could, and naturally lost them. At daybreak they knew they must be within a few miles of the cleared spot in which they had left the big 'plane—but they roughly appreciated the risk of moving in any direction. Toward noon they cautiously made their way up a high ridge and found themselves looking down upon the powder-blasted sides of the ravine in which the camp was located. As nearly as they could judge, the explosion must have swept the upper two-thirds of it—killing or disabling more than half the men in the tents—and, by studying the contours of the lower hills, they could see where the course of the macadam road must be.

Estimating the point where they came upon it to be about a mile below the camp, they could see, approximately, where they might expect to find the 'plane. For another three hours they cautiously scouted over the lower ridges—gradually approaching their destination. Once they had a narrow escape—when they came upon two pickets concealed behind some boulders. But Trevor questioned them so vigorously in German as to whether

they had seen any strangers in the vicinity, or any foot-prints, that they had no suspicion whatever. Just at nightfall the two aviators found the cleared spot and their 'plane—but Trevor discovered that, in coming down upon the rough ground, two of his controlling-wires had been snapped in places very difficult to get at without a light. There was nothing to do but tackle the job as best he could, and do it carefully regardless of the time it took. Twice he had to throw a ray from his electric torch upon the frame, at the risk of being seen by the German pickets. At ten o'clock they heard voices on the ridge above them. Half a dozen men appeared to be cautiously descending to where they were at work. Carter listened for a moment —then calmly asked:

"How much longer, old chap?"

"Three minutes—if everything else is in working order! Help me drag the machine out from these trees, so that it's heading across the open ground! I don't know what we're going to strike, out there, but we must take a chance on that! Now, then! Get up in your seat an' be ready to swing those propeller-blades around when I jump for mine!"

"If there aren't more than half a dozen, we can probably drop them before they see us!"

"Aye, but their shots might easily put the 'plane out of business, and then we'd be at the mercy of any detail that came runnin' down to their assistance! There! If nothin' else gives way, I fancy we can make it, now! Ready? Let her go!"

Trevor's wonderful muffler silenced the exhaust from the two big motors, but the bumping over the stones made

some unavoidable noise. There was a rush through the cedars, down the sides of the ridge, and a dozen crackling shots as the biplane lifted into the air. The bullets came near enough to whistle unpleasantly, but fortunately touched nothing. Inside of an hour the machine floated gently down until its pontoons rested on the water alongside H. B. M. *S-49* in the cove at Cap l'Abeille. As soon as the biplane was hoisted aboard the anchor was raised and the cruiser slipped out to sea in the darkness, running south at full speed.

At ten in the morning she lay-to—outside the three-mile limit—off the harbor of Alicante, and His Lordship went ashore in a fast power-launch. To the customs and military authorities he showed credentials as Special Envoy to His Majesty King Alfonso—being promptly sent up to Madrid in a motor capable of doing eighty miles an hour—the railway service being unreliable on account of the strike.

At Biarritz, some years before, Lord Trevor had rendered a service to Alfonso which that bright and grateful young monarch never expected to forget, and Lady Nan held a place among Queen Victoria's most intimate friends. So, as soon as His Lordship arrived at the capital, a royal equerry called upon him with the request that he present himself at the Palacio Real without the formality of securing an interview through Sir A. H. Hardinge, the British Ambassador. As a matter of diplomatic courtesy, Trevor stopped for a moment, on the way, to notify Sir Arthur of his mission and the Royal command, but didn't take that gentleman with him, for reasons which Sir Arthur could easily surmise. As His Lordship entered the apartment

in the royal suite where the King was awaiting him, Alfonso dismissed the equerry and his personal aides.

"I presume Your Lordship is the bearer of some important communication, but that can wait until we've talked of more personal matters. I have told Her Majesty of your arrival, and she requests that you will dine with us this evening. Is Lady Nan with you?"

"Not this time, Your Majesty—though she would have been glad to accompany me if I had been at all certain as to my movements. I know she will be more than pleased to run down here at the end of the week if Your Majesties——"

"Send her a wireless at once to do so! Consider yourselves guests in the Casa Real for a fortnight or more. You will brighten us up, and help us to forget this cursed war!"

"It is a matter which concerns the war, Your Majesty, that brings me here at this moment—a rather urgent one, in fact."

"Oh, well! Let's go into it, and get the thing over!"

"With Your Majesty's permission, I will give you an exact account of certain things which have happened during the last five days—mentioning names of which I'm positive, and trusting that Your Majesty will be able to draw an inference as to certain others."

Clearly, concisely, Lord Trevor described his meeting with Raymond Carter, of the American Embassy in Paris, at *Stalton House*. He described how Carter had been watching Major Zacata and the Member of Parliament, who was known to be a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy; their being

followed to the lonely manor on Woldingham Downs; the presence of the Condesa de Santaluna, and the work she admitted doing in Madrid; the trip on the cruiser to Cap Cerbere and the night flight over the Pyrenees; the discovery of the big camp—apparently occupied by Spanish troops; Carter's discoveries as to the men, munitions, and uniforms which had been coming into Barcelona from abroad. Then came a graphic description of the terrific magazine explosion, though he was careful not to admit having anything to do with it—and their final escape in the biplane. When he finished, Alfonso sat for several moments in deep thought.

"H-m-m—the Minister of War has duly reported the establishment of a summer camp in that vicinity by the Quartermaster General for the purpose of mountain-campaign and battery practice There has been no discussion about it, because it was assumed to be merely routine work of the War Department. The actual strength of my army, on a peace footing, is less than two hundred thousand men, of which fully three-quarters are regularly stationed in various provinces and islands. So a concentration of fifty thousand men in any such camp as that would require a royal order, ratified by the Cortes—because France would justly consider it a somewhat threatening mobilization on her borders. If you are correct in your estimate as to the number of men up there—the amount of munitions stored in that magazine—your story is proved without question, and I consider that Your Lordship was entirely justified in blowing up that magazine!"

"Pardon me, Your Majesty, I said nothing about *my* blowing up the magazine!"

"It wasn't necessary! Had I been in your place, I should have done it myself! But we must neither of us admit it. Facts of that sort are too easily twisted until they become dangerous. I say, Trevor, how many will that biplane of yours carry safely?"

"It was built for six men, at a pinch—scouting over enemy lines. After I have carefully overhauled it, I fancy there'd be little risk in carrying four."

"Then I think I will make a personal investigation of this matter. Two of my Cabinet Ministers are Spanish to the backbone—they would cheerfully risk their lives to prevent our being drawn into this war. We'll take them as witnesses, after telling them your story—run up from Barcelona to the bay near San Miguel on one of our own cruisers, and make the flight from that point. You can join us on the *Rance* at Barcelona."

The King's plan was carried out next day, the under sides of the big 'plane being painted in yellow and red stripes to fix its identity from below as a Spanish machine. Owing to this coloring, not a single shot was fired as it flew over the camp in the ravine, the German commander taking it for granted that the Spanish Quartermaster General would be able to account for anything seen by the aviators. Had he guessed the identity of the men who could be seen examining the effects of the explosion through their prism-binoculars, he would have brought it down by shell-fire if it had been his last act on earth! As it was, the camp was surprised a week later by several regiments of the Spanish Army which had silently crept up the ridges and covered the ravine with machine-guns from above, before any defense could be made by the

munitionless conspirators. On their return to Madrid, His Majesty made a request of Trevor:

"Er—in regard to the Condesa de Santaluna, would it be possible to get her back in England upon some excuse before you arrest and deal with her? I'd rather Her Majesty would never know of her complicity in this affair —they have always been intimate friends."

## CHAPTER VIII

### A MACHIAVELLIAN COUP IN ROUMANIA

THE Trevors had been guests at the Palacio Real but a day or two before the heavy wagers being made among dignitaries of the Spanish Court, that Roumania would enter the war on the German side within two months, attracted their attention. There had been daily communication between Trieste and a high-altitude wireless outfit in the Pyrenees owned by private parties, and there was no question but that Madrid was getting confidential information from Berlin and Vienna. While His Lordship and Lady Nan were discussing this rumor with Their Majesties—who were as strongly pro-Ally as their Court was in sympathy with Germany and Austria—Sir Abdool reached Gibraltar on one of the British cruisers, and came up to Madrid for a conference with them. Through Oriental channels he had learned that German influence was being used in Bucharest successfully—that the Roumanian situation was far more critical than had been supposed by the *Entente*. After some discussion it was decided that he and Lord Trevor should make their way up through Bulgaria, if possible—having Lady Nan await their return at Gibraltar after her stay with the King and Queen had come to an end. Four days later a long gray shadow—practically invisible at five miles in bright daylight, and not to be seen

at any distance on a rainy day—approached swiftly to within ten miles of the Bulgarian coast, off the Gulf of Lagos. From the mainmast, right aft to the stern, a broad runway had been constructed—near the mast a large cruising biplane rested upon its stout landing-wheels. The upper plane had a width of sixty feet—there were duplicate motors and propellers; tanks carrying a sixty-hour supply of petrol. For scouting and aërial fighting, the machine was designed to carry four men with considerable impedimenta—and ahead of a stiff breeze, it had a record of seven hundred miles in six hours' continuous flight.

As the cruiser's engines stopped, ten miles offshore, an active man in the uniform of a rear admiral in the British Navy appeared on the after-deck and spoke to the *mécanicien* who was tuning up the wire stays of the big 'plane.

"Ready to start, Harry?"

"Aye, sir—she'll do now, I fancy! I've stowed the two portmanteaus where they balance each other—but they can be dropped off in a second, at any time."

In the ward-room, below—which had been the *Ranee's* main saloon before she was placed at the disposal of the Admiralty—Sir Francis Lammerford and one of the British Cabinet Ministers were chatting with Sir Abdool. He was dressed in tweeds of similar cut to the suit into which Trevor changed as soon as he came below. As they were preparing to leave, His Lordship suddenly remembered a question he had meant to ask Sir Francis.

"'Lammy', when was the lawst information you had concernin' Effingham? I *should* know, of course, through

my press syndicate, but I haven't been in touch with our London office for three weeks."

"Why, to the best of my knowledge, Effingham is still editor in chief of the big daily sheet *Resboiul.* Frank Galt came around from Petrograd on *E-72* last week—reporting him as being entirely unsuspected in his *Downing Street* capacity. I fancy you're quite sure to find him plugging away on the job—an' he'll be in position to render you valuable assistance. You'd best watch out for Major von Zimmerling, however—in Bucharest. The man's intuitions are a bit uncanny. He's far cleverer than Von Lemholtz, the German minister. If you really fool him, you'll have the support of every German and Austrian in Roumania."

A few moments later His Lordship and Sir Abdool strapped themselves in their places behind the *mécanicien,* on the big 'plane, and waved their hands to the men on deck as the machine lifted gracefully into the air—flying at a steadily increasing altitude in the direction of the Bulgarian coast. When they were over the mouth of the River Karasou, Trevor outlined the course to be followed.

"If we don't run into a bank of clouds over the mountains, Harry, you can follow the river clear up to within twenty miles of the Rilo Monastery and lift over that jumble of peaks to the north of it. But if it happens to thicken up, keep a straight compass-bearing of northwest by north—right on the point. That'll fetch us to the summit of the Vitosa Planina, d'rectly south of Sofia, in a bit under four hours—at the rate we're goin' now."

"Aye, sir. You'll be coming down at the same open

level on top of that range where I took you when we made the flight from Saloniki, I suppose?"

"That's the place! It's not the highest point of the ridge—can't see that from the city—but it's forty-three hundred feet higher than Sofia, and in plain sight."

Roughly, the air-line distance from the Ægean Sea was just under two hundred miles—more than half of which lay along the valley of the Karasu. They were troubled very little with cross-currents until they went over the Rilo Dagh, 9,845 feet above sea-level, where the cold was intense for an hour. Being well protected against this, however, they finally descended without accident in a small clearing which had been used by Austrian engineers, several years before, for a triangulation point. Concealing the big 'plane in a ravine which ran along one side, Trevor opened two cans of red fire and made a trail of the powder along the precipitous edge of the mountain facing the Bulgarian capital, 4,300 feet below them on the plain of the River Isker—a quantity calculated to burn for half an hour.

When he had lighted this they hurried down a rough trail to a point where the road ended, two miles from the little village of Dragalevski.

By the time they had covered the four miles of descent they came upon a motionless automobile in the woods at the end of the road, with a solitary figure in the driver's seat.

"That you, Stannard?"

"Aye. Just a chance that I happened to see your signal! That nest of intrigue, down yonder, is gettin' worse all the time—in fact, I wonder every morning that half of us are alive! But there's a reaction against Teutonic in-

fluence already—an' I'm supposed to be an American engineer employed by a syndicate, here, on mining an' railway-development projects. I've been concealed half the night in an upper room of a house near the infantry barracks—getting a line on some members of the *Sobranje*. I just happened to poke my head through the roof-scuttle before your light went out."

"Suppose any one else noticed it?"

"There was no indication that they did. People are either conspiring in some private room or asleep at this time of night—an' there's always a bit of military signallin' goin' on, one place or another. Even if some of the officers noticed your fire, they wouldn't suspect anything until they compared notes with the detachments coming back in a week or so."

"We're carryin' Austrian passports, Stannard—with Hungarian an' Turkish *visés* on them. May need entirely diff'rent papers when we leave for the north. What are the chances of gettin' settled in town without bein' stopped an' examined by some official?"

"H-m-m—I can get you into the city before two o'clock. The railway station is on the other side, as you know—an' there's no watch kept upon vehicles comin' in by the Dragalevski Road. I'll drop you at the gate of the Austrian Legation an' get out of sight before any one recognizes me. The Austrian Minister should be able to send you along before daylight to lodgings where no questions will be asked —if you manage to convince him that you belong to his own Foreign Office, or *Wilhelmstrasse*. Say you came in over the Serbian border by motor; a lot of officers are comin' an' goin' that way."

"Very good! Fawncy we can pull that off with little diffic'lty—I know practically all of their recognition-signs an' passwords! At all events, Harry, there'll be no use in your waitin' longer than to-morrow night. If neither of us turns up by that time, you can start back to the *Rance*. It's possible we may come out by way of Odessa an' run down off the Bosphorus on one of the Russian cruisers; in that case Lammerford will get a wireless message from us, an' you can fly over Stamboul with the 'plane."

The ride into the city was accomplished silently, without meeting any one who gave them more than a passing glance. At the Austrian Legation, five minutes' talk with the Minister convinced him that they were distinguished members of the diplomatic corps, on secret service for the Teutonic powers; and he sent them, as guests, to the house of a handsome Viennese who lived, with a supposed husband, in the aristocratic residence quarter south of the palace.

The four met at breakfast—taking stock of and testing each other in ways which any one unfamiliar with secret-service methods would never have suspected. Trevor (as Colonel von Pappenheim) and Sir Abdool (as Narula Pasha) were thoroughly convincing in their assumed rôles. Liechtenstein jokingly tested the Afghan with a few halting words of Arabic, but was so promptly flooded with the real thing that Madame Irma laughed at him. From the Colonel's accent, she judged him a Berliner—asking after a number of acquaintances in that city whom he seemed to know rather intimately.

On Trevor's part, however, he was considerably doubtful as to just where Madame Irma and her supposed hus-

band stood. That they were not really married, he was certain—after catching a side remark between them in Russian, which they appeared to speak a little too well for Austrians. That it might be possible they were actually secret agents of the *Entente*, rather than of Germany and Austria, did not surprise him in the least.

Of all the spots in Europe during the year 1916, Sofia and Bucharest were preëminent as places where people were most emphatically not what they appeared to be. Liechtenstein and his wife might be loyal Austrians—distant connections of the "Prince," as he claimed—or with equal probability, they might be secret agents of the Allies who had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the Austrian Minister to such an extent that they were obtaining vital information for London, Paris, and Petrograd. Half the deputies in the *Sobranje* were opposed to the German alliance—saw in it the eventual ruin of Bulgaria—conspired, day and night, to free their country from it. The other half were quite as strongly determined to go on with what they had begun, as the only possible way out of the mess.

Trevor's interest in the Bulgarian capital was, at this time, merely a transient one. He meant to sow a few seeds of discord, if possible, but his objective was Roumania; and it was necessary for his plans that they should enter that country from the Teutonic side as emissaries of Germany—under the rose. He could easily have reached Petrograd in a British submarine and entered Roumania from the Russian side with no difficulty at all; but in that case, it would have been a more dangerous problem to gain the confidence of Germans in Bucharest to a point where

they accepted him as one of themselves. Madame Irma von Liechtenstein presented a possible element of danger which he dared not overlook. If she were a loyal Austrian, her letters of recommendation would prove exceedingly valuable in Bucharest; if, on the other hand, she were an agent of the *Entente*, she would be certain to write ahead and prepare a fatal trap for him, if indeed she didn't manage to have him put out of business in Sofia.

While they were discussing mutual acquaintances in Roumania one morning she happened casually to mention the Fräulein Hilda von Helmuth, who occupied a handsome residence of her own on the upper Calea Victoriei in Bucharest. Trevor's detached glance and perfectly composed manner betrayed no hint of the sudden interest this name aroused in him. He lighted a cigar—rather deliberately.

"Could it be possible that the Fräulein you mention is the one who was visiting friends in Berlin about eight months ago?"

"Why—yes. Hilda was in Berlin just about that time!"

"Er—wasn't it she who disappeared from there so mysteriously a few weeks later—supposed to have been killed or something of the sort?"

"I never heard of her being killed—nor she, either, I imagine! She's at her home in Bucharest now!"

"You surprise me! We can't be speaking of the same person. H-m-m—tell me, madame, did she ever mention to you her acquaintance with a Doktor Liebknecht, who was *Ober Redakteur* of the *Deutches Reichspressbund?* You seem to be a rather intimate friend—if we are

speaking of the same woman; she would possibly have mentioned the Doktor to you."

Madame Irma gave him a penetrating but swiftly veiled glance—the conversation was taking a most amazing turn, if this Colonel von Pappenheim were really what he claimed to be.

"I think there can be no mistake as to identity, Herr Oberst. Hilda has spoken to me of this Doktor Liebknecht more than once. I have an impression that he saved her life in Berlin—at a time when, through some horrible misunderstanding, she was suspected of being a French spy, and would have been shot before there was any chance of proving her innocence."

"Soh? And did she tell you of finding herself near Mt. Snowdon, in Wales—after disappearing from Berlin, where I am quite positive she is supposed to have been drowned at sea?"

The color faded out of Madame Irma's face; it was at least half a minute before she dared trust herself to speak.

"Herr Oberst, it seems to me you must be of *Wilhelmstrasse*, rather than Vienna, and have picked up some rather amazing misinformation concerning my poor friend!"

"At least, I can assure you of one thing, madame—I do not share *all* of my information with *Wilhelmstrasse*. Unless she has been recognized in Roumania by some Berlin agent familiar with the story, Fräulein von Helmuth is officially supposed to be dead. She was invited by a staff officer, in whose house she was staying, to go with him for a short trial flight in a new zeppelin, from Nauen. This Doktor Liebknecht and another officer were also of the

party. They had gotten into the car when the General was called away for a few moments; and, in the gale which was blowing at the time, the zeppelin happened to break loose from its moorings before he returned. Several days afterward, it was seen by the people on a passing Cunarder to drop into the Atlantic and sink before a boat could reach it. I happen to be a close personal friend of the Doktor's; he told me the whole story."

"And—knowing it—why have you never repeated it to the *Wilhelmstrasse* people?"

"Because there wasn't a shred of real evidence against the two men and the girl who were accidentally carried off in that zeppelin! I don't want them shot if they return to Berlin! Liebknecht is one of the big men in journalism; the Fräulein is a brilliant and interesting girl. It would be inexcusable to kill them without very strong reasons."

That afternoon Madame Irma called upon Olga Napaulova, a celebrated Russian diva who, though a privileged friend of the royal family, was in the service of the Petrograd Foreign Office. When quite sure they could not be overheard, she briefly told the diva all she knew concerning the German colonel and Turkish pasha who were her supposed guests.

"We made them welcome at the Austrian Minister's suggestion—of course. It was too good an opportunity for obtaining information under conditions where they supposed themselves quite safe in what they said or hinted. But I'm beginning to be afraid of this Von Pappenheim; he knows altogether too much—for a *Wilhelmstrasse* man!"

For several moments Madame Napaulova thought over in silence what had been told her.

"Irma, you and Leichtenstein mean to have those men put away somewhere—or left in the hands of unscrupulous Bulgarians who will probably kill them—yes? You certainly have no idea of letting them get into Roumania and use their influence toward swinging the country over to the German side! But I fear you'll be making the same terrible mistake that we did concerning Doktor Liebknecht right here in Sofia. D'Arlenon was warned by Hilda von Helmuth not to harm him until absolutely positive as to which side the man was on. He thought he had proof enough—abducted the Doktor and turned him over to three Bulgarian assassins who would have cut his throat if he had not outwitted them completely. Then we obtained information which strongly indicated his being one of the most famous men in *Downing Street*.

"I don't see how it is possible for this Von Pappenheim to know what he does of the Doktor's escape from Berlin unless Liebknecht himself gave him the details! And if he did that, you may depend upon it that Colonel von Pappenheim is actually on our side—taking this way of getting into Roumania in order to be accepted by the Germans as one of themselves! For Heaven's sake, don't make the mistake D'Arlenon did; men of Leibknecht's ability are altogether too rare! Send word about him to Hilda by some messenger you can trust. Or rather—let *me* do that! One of our Petrograd men goes up to-morrow."

Several days later Von Lemholtz—the Imperial German Minister at Bucharest—was giving final instructions

to a *Wilhelmstrasse* man who was about to leave for Berlin, and the talk had gotten around to a couple of recent arrivals who had been under espionage from the moment they entered the city.

"This Herr Oberst von Pappenheim and Narub Pasha, who have so mysteriously disappeared during the last twenty-four hours, are bigger men than either you or I, my good Franz! I was sure of them at first, in spite of the letters they brought from the Austrian Legation at Sofia. In our first interview they gave no indication of being other than two wealthy business men of the United States, as they claimed, over here to secure orders for war material. But when I invited them to motor out of the city with me and began testing them a little, I became positive that they were of the inner *Wilhelmstrasse* circle—men who are unquestionably in the confidence of the kaiser and the War Staff. You will understand, of course, that it is not for either of us to mention our knowledge of that fact, or even to hint at it. If we did so, it might defeat the objects for which they are in Roumania—and might cost us our official positions, if nothing worse. You will know nothing of them when you reach Berlin—beyond what they wish to be known here—that they are American business men. You will make no mistake about that, my good Franz!"

"Nein—if Your Excellency is quite sure of your facts?"

"Pouf! Major von Zimmerling and Karl Schumm have corroborated them. Not in so many words, you understand! They have simply assured me that those two supposed Americans must be given all the assistance which can be extended to them while in this vicinity. By

that, I know they have been tested in every possible way. And Von Pappenheim, himself, gave me information which will prevent our making a stupendous blunder in the case of another valuable agent of *Wilhelmstrasse*. Did you hear anything in Berlin concerning a certain Hilda von Helmuth—about eight months ago?"

"The Fräulein von Helmuth! Hmph! A spy of the *Quai d' Orsay* who escaped from Nauen in a new zeppelin and was drowned in the Atlantic Ocean a few days later!"

"On the contrary, my good Franz! She is living here in Bucharest, to-day, in a handsome residence of her own which she has occupied for several years! You remember the case of Von Spiegel—who was caught with secret memoranda of the War Staff in a belt under his shirt—and shot at sunrise?"

"*Donner!* That is not easily forgotten! It cast suspicion upon everyone in the Service!"

"Precisely! As did also the man Rupert Wormser—who was caught with practically the same evidence! Well, it was the Fräulein von Helmuth who shadowed them and secured the proof in both cases! And until very recently she has been supposed a French spy! Von Pappenheim told me this information had been sent to Von Jagow by letter—but suggested that any one going to Berlin within a week or so had better repeat it personally. The Fräulein has given me valuable information right here in Bucharest and is in position to obtain more, through her wide acquaintance among the court officials. Her real status must be thoroughly understood in Berlin as soon as possible in order to prevent regrettable mistakes."

"Hmph! I'm glad Your Excellency told me this. One

of the most deadly features in this game we play is assuming the nationality of enemies in order to get our information, and we're too often shot by our own people on suspicion that we're traitors! By the way, did I understand that Von Pappenheim and the Pasha have mysteriously disappeared?"

"Yes. They had a suite at the Grand Hotel Boulevard on the *Elizabeta* and have made quite a number of acquaintances here during the last four or five days—but nobody has seen anything of them since Thursday noon, when they motored out to the Jockey Club."

"H-m-m—— Wonder if any of the *Entente* people have done away with them?"

"Von Zimmerling and Schumm are looking into that now—they are too valuable men to be wiped out without a severe accounting! But my personal belief is that they have assumed other characters for the purpose of procuring information here in Bucharest. Even from our brief acquaintance, I should imagine them artists at that sort of thing."

While Von Pappenheim and Narub Pasha were under discussion at the German Legation, two dignified Turks of the better class were taking coffee, after their *pilau* and *kabobs*, in the *selâmlik* of a house in the eastern, or Saracenic, quarter of Bucharest. From a curtained archway came the tinkle of an Oriental guitar and the caterwauling which passes for song among Arabs and Osmanli, but to this the dignified Pasha gave not the slightest attention until the monotonous syllables were varied by a rich contralto voice singing a plaintive Russian melody. He was courteously ignoring it, after the manner of Orientals,

when an apologetic smile appeared under the white beard of his host.

"What thou hearest, Pasha Effendi, hath a strange sound in the ears of Osmanli—but we, in Bucharest, adopt some of the *feringhee* customs as a means of better acquaintance with those among whom we live. Also, the times be changing from the old order. Some of our women receive education in Paris and other cities of the *giaour*, and very many of our young men. Even *I* do not insist upon the *yashmak*, as when I was a young married man with my first wives; my women seldom wear it in the house, and I sometimes permit them to eat with those who I know will respect them. Again, there be matters spoken of in the bazaars by this one or that one. There be women's gossip in the houses of the *giaours* which is picked up and remembered in the *harim*, where the tale is told me as it was heard. Thus knowledge is come by which may be used by thee and me. Thou wert speaking of senators and deputies who may be under German influence—who recently favored commercial treaties with Germany and Austria? Touching upon such a matter, one hears these things: First—there is Lacoresco, a Senator and former Cabinet Minister. He is secretly supported by Vascelor, Brundei, Dudesti, Cantemir, and others who be lesser men. The Roumanian people do not favor German influence in any way. Her Majesty is English—a Princess of Saxe Coburg Gotha, but her father was King Edward's brother and she hath a large following here. The King is a Hohenzollern prince—he hath imposed his will upon Parliament with the assistance of the men I named to thee. But, look thou! He is more concerned with the future of Roumania

than any feeling of loyalty for his German relatives—and *might* declare war against them were he certain as to that which be written."

"Thinkest thou these men were bought, Effendi—that they are supporting Germany, against Roumanian interests?"

"Of that, I have no certain knowledge. Yet it is said that there be weighty reasons for what they do—and they risk much in doing it. There be mutterings in the air against them—that their lives will not be of great length—for, if what is whispered in the bazaars be true, they will be regarded as traitors to the best interests of their countrymen in Bukovina, across the mountains, who have been oppressed by Austria for centuries. Roumania is Latin and Slav—not Teuton."

"If now, Effendi, certain matters should come to pass by which the influence of these men be curtailed or removed, the people here would say it was the will of Allah, would they not?"

"Thou speakest words of wisdom, Pasha Effendi. It is written that what thou hath said will come to pass before many days—but it be a matter that one may not venture hastily, lest he fall by the way. The arm of the German is strong and reacheth far. Behold! We Osmanli did not desire war and slept not in the same tent with the German—yet it came to pass that we fought against the *Inglesi*, who have been our friends, before we knew how the fighting started."

After Lord Trevor and Sir Abdool, in their recently assumed characters, were seen driving out to the Jockey Club early Thursday afternoon, they apparently van-

ished into the air. Sir Abdool had vaulted from the car at a turn of the road in the suburbs without being noticed by the chauffeur—and had entered an apparently unoccupied house, from which he presently emerged as a Turk of the old régime, with turban and baggy trousers. His Lordship, as Colonel von Pappenheim, had dismissed the car at the club-house, and returned to the city with a couple of Roumanian officers who set him down near the end of the *Elizabeta*. Turning into a narrow alley, he exchanged his Fedora hat for a cloth cap which he drew from his pocket and—moistening his fingers from a small bottle—took all of the upward twist from the ends of his blond moustache, giving it an English droop instead. He then assumed a rather slouching gait entirely different from his military German bearing. The changes were slight enough in themselves; yet nobody who had not closely studied his face and figure would have recognized him as the same man when he walked down the Strada Lipscani and entered the office of *Resboiul*, one of the leading daily newspapers.

Telling a page on the lower floor that he wished to see the editor in chief upon matters connected with the *International Press Syndicate*, he was presently taken upstairs to a private room where a man of forty-five—either French or Italian, from his appearance—was seated at a large flat desk. When the door was closed Trevor offered his cigar-case to the editor, lighted a long brown *invincible* himself, and pulled a chair up close to the desk.

"You prob'ly don't recognize me, Effingham—but you will when I ask about that trunkful of clothes I left here eight months ago. S-s-h! Better not mention names! There's too much German influence here. A couple of us

came up through Bulgaria to see if something couldn't be done to offset it. The trunk is in that little dressing room of yours, I suppose? Exactly! Any chance of bein' seen while I make a few changes?"

"Can't think of any, old chap. There's only this door and one window in that room. Fellow might see you from an aeroplane, but that's the only way. My people downstairs wouldn't allow any one to put a ladder against the building, and there's a twenty-foot open space all around it. I'll give orders that you're a man from the Syndicate headquarters—so that you can get in here any hour of the day or night. When you've made your change, I'll tell you about conditions in Bucharest. May help some—though of course I don't know how well posted you may happen to be."

For the next two days Trevor called at various houses and offices—part of the time as a Russian engineer, and then as an Englishman of title who had known the Queen at home, before her marriage. On the afternoon of the day when Sir Abdool took luncheon with Sidi Achmet Effendi in the old Mohammedan quarter, His Lordship called upon the Fräulein Hilda von Helmuth at her beautifully furnished house in the Calea Victoriei—as the Prussian Colonel, Von Pappenheim.

After fifteen minutes of confidential talk, she became convinced that he was the man she had formerly known as Doktor Hermann Liebknecht—to whom she most certainly owed her life and liberty and who, she was positive, must be one of the most brilliant men in *Downing Street*. While they were talking, her butler admitted another

caller, a Major Konstantine Radeff, whom she introduced as a Bulgarian—formerly a member of the *Sobranje*, and more recently squadron-commander in a cavalry regiment which had been active in the Serbian campaign. After they had chatted for a while upon casual topics, she took them to a smoking den on the second floor which had been made sound-proof for the purpose of secret conferences. When the leather-upholstered door was closed, she joined them with a Turkish cigarette and did some necessary explaining.

"Major, you know that I am supposed to be in the service of *Wilhelmstrasse*. Our good friend, the Herr Oberst, assures me that it is again safe for me to venture into Berlin—though it seems a miracle that he has been able to create that impression there. You both know, however, that my sympathies and my services belong elsewhere. The Colonel himself is accepted by every *Wilhelmstrasse* agent in Bucharest as being unquestionably one of them. Yet he assisted me to escape from Berlin when I certainly would have been shot within a day or two. You, Major, are accepted by every German or Austrian as a Bulgar from Sofia—who has fought with them against the Serbs. Yet to one who knows certain things —you ride, sometimes, like an officer of Cossacks, and you understand the subtle point of a joke in Russian as no Bulgar ever understood it. You and I both have suspected that several of our Roumanian senators and deputies were secretly using their influence in favor of Berlin for more solid reasons than mere conviction, but we haven't been able to obtain sufficient proof to expose them in the newspapers or to justify more extreme measures. Where

we failed, the Colonel and a friend who is with him have succeeded. They know that large sums of money and other considerations have been accepted here by twenty-five or thirty men in public life—and have the evidence!"

"Then we are, at last, in position to strike a blow, Fräulein! There should be no delay!"

"What do you suggest, *mon ami?* I think the problem may not prove quite as simple as you imagine. These men are all prominent and influential."

Radeff lighted a cigar. A look of vindictive unscrupulousness appeared in his crafty eyes.

"Each of those men is more dangerous—both to Roumania and the *Entente*—than a whole brigade in the field! A dead snake can poison no more people!"

Von Pappenheim raised a slightly protesting hand.

"Depends somewhat upon how wide an acquaintance, how many personal friends and relatives, the 'dead snake' happens to have, don't you know! I've known 'dead snakes' that were considered martyrs—and refused to stay buried. I'll not deny, Major, that I've killed men when there was no other alternative—but they had an equal chance with me, as a rule. Assassination has never seemed entirely justifiable in my country."

"Suppose we say *execution* instead of the more offensive word? Your country executes traitors and criminals, I presume?"

"Aye—but usually after a fair trial, in which they have every opportunity to produce evidence in their own defense."

"Suppose you are convinced of their guilt, and there is

no time for a trial? Suppose the opportunity for execution may not come again?"

"Oh, extreme cases demand extreme measures, of course. But I think we may accomplish our object with these members of the Roumanian parliament and yet avoid assassination. For example, suppose half a dozen of them, and as many loyal Roumanians, were invited to dinner either by Von Lemholtz or Von Zimmerling—known to be a representative of *Wilhelmstrasse*—and that there were other guests believed to be in sympathy or connected with the Teutonic powers? Include a couple of leading newspaper editors. Place an expert pickpocket among the dinner servants. Have him plant imperial Russian banknotes, of ten thousand roubles each, in the pockets of those men we desire to eliminate. I will supply the money. Er—do you begin to catch the idea?"

The Fräulein clapped her hands in sheer delight as the Machiavellian inference became clear in her mind. "Oh! But that is exquisite, *mon ami! C'est un coup trop beau!* You see it, do you not, Konstantine? At the close of the meal, when everyone is in good humor, someone denounces those men—some loyal senator, shall we say, who has been tipped off to demand that they be searched! I've just the man in mind—Stefan Macelari—a man whose honesty is a byword throughout the country! He searches them—finds the Russian money! It is just as treacherous for our senators to sell themselves to Russia as to Berlin! The editors will print a full account of their treachery; public opinion will force them to resign in disgrace! As for the *Wilhelmstrasse* men, they will be certain they have been betrayed by those

who were in their own pay and will put no more confidence in any of the twenty-five! It completely disarranges their organization, here—compels them to search for other tools at a time when public sentiment is turning against them!"

As the plan became clear to Radeff, a gleam came into his partly veiled eyes. There were features about it which appealed to him in ways that had not occurred to the other two. He came of a more primitive race—a people who seldom favored diplomatic methods where force appeared to be the simpler one. His education, however, enabled him thoroughly to appreciate the finesse of Von Pappenheim's suggestion.

"It would be a master-stroke, Colonel! I think Von Zimmerling a better man to give the dinner than Von Lemholtz. The Imperial German Minister would probably hesitate about giving any such an affair in the Legation, though he would undoubtedly attend it with the rest of us in some other place. Von Zimmerling lives in a house big enough for such an entertainment, and it is generally understood to be a rendezvous of Teutonic politicals. No real evidence, of course—but the people here *think* so, and that couldn't be better for our purpose. Now, if I convince Von Zimmerling that some of his Roumanian tools are betraying the kaiser, he'll give that dinner—and make a point of seeing that everyone invited gets there, too! He can find out by telephone what night most of them are free—get others to shift any engagements which might interfere. Every minute those senators and deputies are unmolested is dangerous for the *Entente*—I think I will go to Von Zimmerling at once

with the suggestion! Doubtless the Fräulein will keep me in touch with you, Colonel!"

When Radeff had left the house Von Pappenheim remained for a while—discussing various political developments with the Fräulein. As it began to grow dark, she went into the front drawing room for a moment and glanced into the street from behind the curtains. He noticed that she appeared to be slightly nervous.

"What is it, *ma belle?* Something has alarmed you!"

"Colonel, have you any reason to think the man Karl Schumm suspects you? He's loitering on the next corner, as if waiting for someone—or else watching some house in this neighborhood!"

"I fancy he and Von Zimmerling feel entirely satisfied as to my real status, but it's possible he may have noticed me coming in here to call upon you and is watching to get some idea as to your other callers."

"Suppose he doesn't happen to see you come out?"

"He would be likely to suspect one of three things: an intrigue with you which might be entirely personal; a combination of forces, enabling us to act more effectively in Bucharest; or foul play, in the event that you prove to be really of the *Quai d' Orsay.* I've not been seen as Von Pappenheim since Thursday noon, until I motored here from a place in the Strada Lipscani, three hours ago. It's not unlikely that the *Wilhelmstrasse* people have suspected foul play from my disappearance, and are trying to locate me. I would almost swear that Schumm was nowhere in sight when I came here. Might have pumped the chauffeur of that car, of course—but even then, he

can't be sure that I didn't leave this house before he reached here."

"Were you intending to go back to the Grand Hotel Boulevard as Von Pappenheim—when you left this house?"

"I think not. There are investigations I want to make before that dinner is arranged—couldn't make them as the Colonel."

"Then you'd better—— (But pardon me—what was it you were going to ask?)"

"About this Major Radeff? Are you quite sure of him? A mistake in knowing what such a man really is would mean disaster to our Governm'nts and annihilation for us, you know!"

"My personal knowledge of Radeff—who is really Boris Kokenoff, a Muscovite—dates back eighteen years. His mother was murdered by Austrians in Galicia; his fiancée was deceived and abandoned in Berlin by a captain of the Imperial Guard. Were he allowed to carry out his own inclinations with any Teutonic prisoners who were in his charge, I wouldn't care to be in their positions. I know less of *you*, my dear friend, than I do of that man."

"Hmph! I gave you details, a few hours ago, which only one man on earth could possibly have told. No, *ma belle!* You know the Governm'nt I serve even better than I know yours—and I believe there is that feeling between us which would prevent our ever betraying each other, even though I'm a married man very much in love with my wife. We have faced death together—twice. The weight of a hair in the balance would have destroyed us. I asked you about Radeff because there is something

sinister in his manner. What you say about his mother and fiancée partly explains it—but it raises the question as to whether he will control his natural inclinations in a diplomatic coup as delicate as the one we're trying to pull off."

"It is impossible to be quite certain as to that, but I'll answer for his loyalty. Now, if you wish to avoid the man Karl Schumm, out there, you'd better leave the house by another way. In my garden, at the rear, there is a long pergola—so thickly covered with vines that it is impossible to recognize any one passing beneath them. There is a door in the fence at which the pergola ends. On the other side is a thick double hedge, ten feet high, with a path between. It ends in the grounds of a house on the Calea Grivitei. Any time you wish to escape observation, you may come in that way; the other house belongs to the French Government and is occupied by a caretaker and his wife, who are paid to see nothing."

Next morning Trevor received a hint over the telephone that the dinner at Von Zimmerling's had been arranged for Wednesday evening—and that, owing to pressure in the right quarters, everyone invited would assuredly be present. Discussing the affair in Effingham's private dressing room, adjoining his editorial office, neither the journalist nor Sir Abdool anticipated any miscarriage of the scheme if Major Radeff carried out the few details entrusted to him. Trevor—as the Colonel—had seen Von Zimmerling at his own house that morning. The *Wilhelmstrasse* man had taken him through the spacious reception and dining rooms—explaining how he proposed

seating his guests and what he meant to provide as entertainment.

"I have my doubts," he said, "as to whether Radeff can really prove what he claims against those men who have been in our pay, because we have watched them too closely and paid them too liberally—far larger amounts than we ever dreamed of paying our tools in France and England. Bucharest is noted for the frightfully high play which is customary at all the clubs. When a man frequently gambles away a hundred thousand *lei* in a single night, he isn't tempted by a paltry twenty thousand marks—especially if he is very prominent in public life. But—we shall see! If Radeff proves his charge, we shall have to begin all over again in Roumania—because it will be impossible to trust a single one of the twenty-six politicians we have already bought!"

As the evening approached, Lord Trevor's mind was constantly prodded by that sixth sense which had so frequently warned him to be on his guard against the unexpected. He felt, intuitively, that something not on the cards would happen; yet, consider the scheme as he might, from every angle he could find no point upon which to hang a definite suspicion. That he and Sir Abdool were under more or less espionage he accepted as part of the game—and took his measures accordingly. He knew that the more elusive he proved to be, the more closely the espionage would be drawn, but was *not* aware that communications from Madame Liechtenstein and the Russian diva, in Sofia, had established him even more securely as a *Wilhelmstrasse* man. Being positive that he was really an agent of the *Entente*, they were further-

ing his activities in every way they could. It was a game of counter-intrigue, with no individual entirely certain as to the real status of any other, but assuming certain probabilities because there was no other way of reaching a working basis.

By seven o'clock on Wednesday evening all of the invited guests had assembled at Von Zimmerling's house. The majority of them had no suspicion of ulterior motives behind the invitation—supposing it to be merely one of those occasional entertainments for which he had acquired a reputation in Bucharest. There was, naturally, an assumption that the war and Roumanian politics would be touched upon during the evening, because it was impossible for any function to escape those subjects under the circumstances. But even the six traitor senators hadn't the faintest idea that they were suspected of taking German money or other substantial considerations. (There had been considerable transferring of desirable real estate also.)

Von Zimmerling's chef was a Hungarian from Budapest; the meal, a gastronomic triumph thoroughly appreciated by the guests. Just before coffee was served a party of Circassian girls came into the room through a rear door and performed an Oriental *nautch* that left very little to the imagination. Then a *première* from the National Theatre appeared in a black chiffon ballet-costume—giving a dance, upon one end of the long table, which any lover of the terpsichorean art would have gone miles to see.

During the meal Lord Trevor (as Colonel von Pappenheim) had been watching—waiting—for the startlingly un-

expected. As the dinner progressed, the situation grew more tense for him. He was as certain that something would happen—entirely outside of the prearranged plan—as he was of Von Zimmerling's taste in wines, and was keyed up to a nerve-wrecking pitch with the determination that it must be turned to the advantage of the *Entente* if he could only think quickly enough after it happened.

The coffee appeared—accompanied by Havanas that one would scarcely have expected in a Balkan capital. Trevor had been watching two of the waiters so closely that he knew just when they must have shoved the ten-thousand-rouble notes into the inside coat pockets of Senators Lacoresco, Vascelor, Frundei, Dudesti, Cantemir, and Revoloff. These gentlemen were representatives of the oldest families in Roumania—very prominent socially and politically—universally respected. At the moment they were filled to repletion with an excellent dinner and numerous glasses of wine—so that, as the waiters bent over them to remove articles from the table, to pour their coffee or wine, they were very far from being sufficiently alert to notice a hand inside the lapels of their coats as a waiter leaned against them in reaching across their shoulders.

As the guests lighted cigars and commenced to sip their coffee, there was absolutely nothing to suggest what was coming. Then—the thing happened! Trevor saw Lacoresco suddenly stiffen in his chair, start to rise—and sag back, an inert, lifeless mass of clay. The other five were similarly affected inside of two minutes. Lacoresco had been sitting near the head of the table, on Von Zimmerling's right—and for a moment the German sup-

posed his seizure to be a stroke of apoplexy. When he noticed the other five, his face expressed a puzzled consternation. This was far more than he had bargained for; he couldn't understand it in the least—couldn't get his wits to work in the attempt to fathom Radeff's purpose, if he were really behind such a monstrous act.

Trevor muttered an emphatic "Damnation!" under his breath. ("Oh, the fool! The utterly stupid fool! Spilled the beans, after all!") His Lordship's brain was flashing back and forth like forked lightning in a desperate search for something which might turn the catastrophe to advantage—and a sudden blaze of inspiration suggested a daring way to make the whole affair a thousand times more effective than had been at first considered possible.

Rising from his chair in a manner ominously calm, he glanced slowly from one horrified face to another, around the table. In spite of his black dinner-coat and absence of military trappings, he was the cold-blooded German officer in every line of his face and figure—the machine which executes the orders of higher authority regardless of all human scruples.

"Gentlemen, His Imperial Majesty the kaiser has a long arm! He exacts full punishment for treachery wherever it is found! These six dead men were in the employ of the Imperial German Government, to further its interests in Roumania. More than a million and a half *leï* have been paid them for their influence in the Roumanian parliament, in our favor. But they thought they could play with Germany—serve two masters. Each one of them—and eighteen others, who will assuredly pay the penalty for their treachery—has attempted to

sell not only Germany but their own country to Russia! The proof will be found upon them at this moment—for they received payments from Russia not half an hour before they entered this house. Major Radeff! Will you search the bodies and produce the proof!"

There was a deathly silence as Radeff—his face chalky white—produced, from one pocket after another, Russian bank-notes of large denominations. Von Pappenheim had beaten his carefully arranged plans by a matter of seconds—and it streaked through his mind that every German, Austrian, or Bulgarian in that room would escape from Bucharest by a hair if he were lucky enough to get out at all. Again Trevor spoke. There was an ominous menace in his final remarks.

"One regrets that so pleasant an evening must have so tragic an ending—but this execution had to be carried out! It was necessary to demonstrate that our Government will tolerate neither opposition nor treachery! You will all go to your own homes now. Within an hour these bodies will be sent to an undertaking establishment, where their relatives may claim them."

The loyal Roumanians and other guests were stunned. In silence they took up their hats and coats in the hall, and went out. As Sir Abdool walked along the now deserted streets with Effingham, the editor drew a long breath of gasping amazement.

"My God! That was the most stupendous thing I ever saw done in the diplomatic service! Somehow, it hadn't occurred to me that one of our *Downing Street* men would descend to assassination—cyanide poisoning, at that! It's not done, you know! Who Von Pappenheim

really is I've not the faintest idea but I had supposed him one of the big men in our service."

"The greatest one of all, Effingham! You'd never recognize the man from what you've seen of him, here. He is our famous *Diplomatic Free Lance*—and what he has just done in that house is, I think, the most amazing coup of his entire career! *Radeff* was the poisoner—not Von Pappenheim! The Colonel has been suspicious of that man ever since this affair was suggested to him. You know all the details of the original plan—which must have been effective as far as those senators were concerned. But Radeff, with his insane hatred of all Germans, went far beyond his instructions—or anything we really dreamed he'd do. When the Colonel saw these men dying in their chairs he realized the whole catastrophe—and his marvelous brain saw the only way out. The cardinal principle with Germany, in this war, has been a fixed belief in frightfulness, terrorism, intimidation. Nothing could be more essentially German than what they consider the just execution of those men for treachery—not to their own country, but to the German Empire! The insolence of such an idea, from the Roumanian viewpoint, wouldn't occur to them.

"Von Zimmerling and Von Lemholtz are undoubtedly admiring the Colonel beyond measure, at this moment, for what they consider his sublime nerve in openly assuming the responsibility for such a killing. They believe—honestly believe—that it will have the effect of so intimidating Roumanian politicians that none of them will dare have any dealings with Russia, or support any movement to intervene on the side of the *Entente*.

"But if they knew the Roumanian character better, they might suspect the storm of indignation this act will arouse—the overwhelming sentiment against Teutonic influence. It will be said by every newspaper in the city that the finding of those Russian notes upon the bodies was a plant. Those waiters will be arrested—and forced to confess! Those dead men were altogether too prominent for their fellow citizens really to believe the charges against them. And those who are known to be of Teutonic nationality or affiliations had better get out of Bucharest while they can! This settles the question of Roumania's declaring war—on Germany—*not* the *Entente!* But—I say, old chap! You and the Colonel are in a dev'lish dangerous position at this moment. What?"

"You'll never see Colonel von Pappenheim again in this country. How we two are going to get out is a rather serious problem. But the man whom you knew as Doktor Liebknecht and Von Pappenheim may dine with you, six months from now, as—let us say—a general in the French army—an Italian statesman—a Russian count! Who knows?"

## CHAPTER IX

### THE SHIFTING MINISTRIES AND THE GREEN CIRCLE

A FEW weeks after the startling affair in Roumania, the winter loan-exhibition of the Royal Academy, for the War Fund, had packed the salons of *Burlington House* with the cream of British aristocracy on the evening of the private view, in spite of a cold and steady drizzle which had been falling all the afternoon; and those who were leaving early found themselves marooned by a dense yellow fog which had succeeded the rain. Occasionally a figure blessed with the topographic sense detached itself from the waiting crowd under the portico and ventured along the Piccadilly sidewalk through the murk, or cut through Burlington Arcade into Old Bond Street, where the sidewalk was narrower.

One of these ventured out through the entrance-court in the wake of a tall man in a magnificent sable-lined topcoat who, with amazing sureness, located a gray landaulet at the kerb. Now, students of human nature get a line on the nice distinctions in a man's character by the way he addresses servants or assumed inferiors. In this case, the tall man's tone was as courteous as if he had been addressing one of his own family—and that of his chauffeur was tinged with something deeper than a feeling of loyal servitude.

"Ah! Here you are, Sabub! I fancied you'd manage

the Bobbies somehow an' stick pretty close to the spot. Er—how about gettin' on? Could you make it, d'ye suppose?"

"*Aie, Thakur Bahadur*, it may be done by one who hath a keen scent, and ears that catch the whisper of feet upon the stones. 'Tis but the feeling one's way along the kerbs of Old Bond Street and of Grosvenor Square."

The shorter man who had followed through the outer court started, slightly, at the sound of the other's voice. That of the chauffeur was new to him, but so unmistakably Oriental as to identify his employer. There was but one English peer who maintained a household of high-caste Afghans. For an instant the stranger hesitated within two feet of His Lordship, debating whether to speak or not. Then, with a shrug of diffidence, he was turning away when a gust of wind thinned the fog until his face was dimly revealed by the motor-lamps. His Lordship saw it—hesitated until sure of the other's identity—then sprang forward and grasped his arm.

"I say! Jimmy Grantham! My word, old chap, this is a bit of luck—what? One hears of you occasionally, don't you know—but you're like an old fox, stickin' close to his hole. Seems years between the times you come out into the open! Eh?"

"Why—it's—it's very kind of Your Lordship to remember me, I'm sure——"

"Cut that, Jimmy—*cut* it, d'ye hear! You've no excuse for takin' that tone with me, an' you know it! Now, where were you goin'? To your diggin's—or around to the laboratory in the *Royal Institution?* Eh?"

Grantham's face expressed intense surprise at this evi-

dent knowledge of his activities upon the part of the most popular and the third wealthiest peer in the British Empire.

"Your Lordship has heard, then, of my experimenting—around at the '*Institution!*' Ah—yes—you might have run across one of the old crowd who'd happened to see me there——"

"Faith—it's a bit more than that, Jimmy. The man who isolated the active principle in *cyanocin* cawn't expect to be entirely overlooked by the scientists, you know! Sir Robert Forby told me what you'd been at, down in Manchester—an' it struck us that the lab' in the *Royal Institution* would be splendidly equipped for such work. We're both on the Board, you know."

"Then—I really owe the professorship to you——?"

"On the contr'ry! To nothin' but your own good head-piece, old chap! The '*Institution*' is fortunate in gettin' brains of your sort—always lookin' about for 'em. Er—if you are headed that way, take me along an' explain some of the things you've been diggin' at. I've an hour or two. Were it not for the mass of work piled upon one by this cursed war, I'd have looked you up months ago."

"Aye—between your naval service as Rear Admiral, and the startling things one hears of your doing in the Aviation Corps, I should imagine you'd little time even for the affairs of your own vast properties, Trevor. If you really care about spending an hour with me—and I thoroughly appreciate what that means from a man in your position—suppose we step up to my diggings in the *Albany*, yonder. They're a good cut above my old lodgings

in Manchester—thanks to the liberal salary attached to that Professorship——"

"Hmph! When the British Governm'nt employs a scientist to work out chemical formulæ which may help us to win the war, at least it should pay enough to make him physically comfortable! I suppose you fancy it safer not to show me things at the lab' which might leak out, and get about—eh?"

"Quite the contrary, Your Lordship! (Eh? Oh, well—if you insist! It's very decent of you, Trevor; I'm really not in your class at all, you know. Never was, for that matter.) What I was getting at was this: I leave nothing around loose at the laboratory which might amount to hints that some experimenter with German sympathies could pick up. But a room in my living quarters is fitted up with enough appliances to permit of a checking-up process whenever I come to the final stages of an experiment. I can give you a better and safer idea, there, of what I'm doing than I could at the *Institution*. We can easily feel our way along by the railing outside The *Royal Society*."

Instructing his faithful Afghan to manœuvre the car around to a position in front of the Albany Court, His Lordship took Grantham's arm—and they had little difficulty in reaching the chemist's chambers upon an upper floor. Grantham explained the way he had protected, during his absence, the room used as a laboratory, by a system of electric wiring that would have given any prowling investigator a very bad quarter of an hour. Locking themselves in, they discussed various experiments of the highest value to science and the War Office.

Then the chemist drew his old friend's attention to a sticky brown sediment in the bulb of a large retort.

"There's one of the most curious and powerful drug-principles which has ever come within my knowledge, Trevor. It's merely residuum, as you see—precipitated in the distillation of certain heavy alcoholic solutions. I was after something which could be used in a one-hundredth attenuation to build up a synthetic liquor for use as a general substitute, after the war. Spirituous liquors are quite certain to be distilled in time of peace, no matter what the Government restriction may be—or smuggled. But it is possible to produce chemical substitutes with the full taste, yet with ninety per cent. less of the normal alcoholic effects. This is being tested out upon three young doctors who volunteered to assume whatever risk there might be—and the first two months show entire success.

"But that stuff in the retort is a vastly different matter. Taken internally, it is actively toxic. I figure the fatal dose, to the average man, as something like ten grains. But the fumes of the stuff, when burning, produce a very remarkable effect—and are dangerous to about the same degree as successive attacks of delirium-tremens—that is, the first time a man steeped his tongue and throat in the fumes from twenty-five or thirty grains of the stuff, he would get the same after-effect as a mild case of D. T.—recovering in perhaps forty-eight hours. If he should breathe the fumes again within a week, the effect would be that of protracted D. T. A third dose, of that strength, within a fortnight would kill any man whose heart wasn't entirely sound. These, however, are the effects one might naturally infer from such residuum——

"An' you've struck somethin' a good bit more interestin' than that—what?"

"Precisely! I've had no chance to give it a conclusive test, as yet—but from only five grains, in a cigar which I gave the Jap who does my chambers in the morning, I'm willing to stake my scientific reputation upon the statement that the stuff will make the most close-mouthed man you show me babble everything he knows—exactly as the average weak-headed man will do after soaking down a lot of whisky for several days! That Jap is a clam—polite, efficient, minds his own business, never the least word of gossip about any lodger in the building or about his own affairs. I put the five grains into a cigar which I left on the table in my living room—knowing it was a habit of his to smoke stray ones he found in that way—and locked myself into the laboratory.

"The Jap came in to do the place—fancied I was out—lighted the cigar and smoked as he swept the carpet. Presently he sat down in my easy-chair, crossed his legs, and began talking to himself. I came in, but he sat there and grinned—never stirred to get up—didn't sense the fact that he was doing anything irregular. Then he talked a blue streak—English, French, Nipponese. He naïvely mentioned appropriating a number of articles from various chambers—told pretty serious things about half a dozen men and women. Trevor—that close-mouthed Jap mentally turned himself inside-out! Presently he talked slower—slower—fell into a stupor. I worked for an hour to bring him around—told him I'd come in and found him unconscious on the floor. Apparently, he hadn't the faintest recollection of what had happened—

because, next day, I knew by the smell that he'd been smoking a harmless cigar which I'd purposely left for him."

"H-m-m—I s'pose you'd get pretty much the same residuum as that from a distillation of almost any alcoholic liquors—not?"

"That occurred to me, when I found what the stuff would do. Tried a dozen liquors in different combinations—but obtained nothing approaching that residuum. You see, I was using a very unusual combination of alcoholic *solutions*—not liquors in the commercial sense."

"Er—would there be any diffic'lty in gettin' that exact combination again?"

"Not for *me*—because I keep a sort of blind key to everything I work out—in symbols. But another chemist might not hit it in a hundred thousand times."

"About how much of it have you, there?"

"Oh—roughly—possibly eight hundred grains."

"Jimmy, the next time you make a really scientific test of that stuff, I wish you'd do it under my direction—after I've made certain arrangements, don't you know! Er—I say, old chap—we used to be fast pals in the Madras days—I fawncy you'd do anything in reason for me—what?"

"You're jolly well sure of that without asking, Trevor! Why, man, it seems I owe even this professorship to you! Oh, yes, I do—it was your suggestion to the Board that got me down here! What is it you want done?"

"Er—would you entertain a proposition to sell me the secret of that stuff, outright? For example—I'm to have what's in that retort, an' you're never to distill any more

of it except as I order. Nobody else to have a grain of it! You name your own price, of course."

"How would you want to use it, Trevor? I'd have to know all about that before I considered——"

"Oh, I'm no unscrupulous criminal! My reputation is pretty well known all over the world. I want that stuff to use in this war—in the int'rests of the British an' French Governm'nts. An' I'll give you fifty thousand pounds for absolute control of it—memoranda of the formula to be sealed and filed in my underground vaults at *Trevor Hall* in South Devon."

"That's about all you need to say, Trevor! Such a sum will make me independent for life—with leisure to carry out experiments in lines which particularly appeal to me. And I trust you more than any man I've ever known. Want this residuum now? I'll scrape it out of the retort and put it in a glass jar for you."

From the *Albany*, His Lordship was driven through the fog by his Afghan chauffeur to Park Lane, where nearly all of the Cabinet and a few other statesmen had been gathering, during the past hour, in the big library on the ground floor. Large platters of cakes and sandwiches had been placed upon one end of the massive centre table—under which six floor-plugs connected as many telephones with trunk-wires leading from the house switchboard, in a vault forty feet below the garden level—and a monster samovar of polished brass filled the room with a pungent aroma of Java coffee. Apparently it was to be an all-night conference. The Asquith ministry had fallen, two days before—and the "little Welshman" had been laboring

almost incessantly, with the other men scattered about the room, to form a new War Government. Every face bore traces of the thirty months' strain, particularly that of Sir Edward Wray—who had been England's *Foreign Secretary* for eleven strenuous years—and the Premier himself, huddled down in a big chair by the Dutch fireplace—shaken, at times, by the hacking cough which had been tormenting him for the past week. He was almost at the limit of his endurance.

Dyvnaint's mansion in Park Lane had been selected for the conference because of the absolute privacy offered by its big Jacobean library—a room thirty by forty, with a coved ceiling fifteen feet above the black oak floor.

As Trevor came into it, one of the statesmen was making a formal motion to appoint a chairman of the conference—but the Earl stopped him with a protesting hand.

"Gentlemen—when business men get together for a conference at which time is an important consideration, they dispense with all formality and accomplish more in three hours than any parliamentary debate has ever done in a week! We're here upon the most urgent sort of business—time is the first consideration. It is understood by all of us that His Majesty has asked our friend over there by the fireplace to form a new Ministry; suppose we hear his preliminary ideas upon the subject?" (The former War Minister straightened up a little in his chair and glanced around the circle with eyes which fairly burned.)

"Thank you, Trevor! England's greatest need at this moment is for men able and willing to cut the whole bale of red-tape with one slash of the shears! Now, gentlemen,

the first question I would like to settle definitely is that of the Foreign Office. I fancy we'd all like to have His Lordship retain the portfolio, if he will come a little further toward our way of thinking." (Sir Edward Wray had received his peerage a few weeks before, according to precedent. His thin, ascetic face bore the marks of physical suffering, as he sat thinking for a moment before replying. Finally, he glanced around at them with a faint smile.)

"I fully appreciate the offer, sir, but there are various reasons why I should decline. I am in poor health—not able to give the Department all it demands. I've held the portfolio for eleven years—it is difficult for me to see matters in other than the diplomatic light. For example—Greece! After the revolution of 1828-29, England, France, and Russia guaranteed the autonomy of Greece as a constitutional kingdom—and placed Otto of Bavaria on the throne in '33. The Greeks kicked him out in '62—and we put George of Denmark in his place. In international usage, we are guardians—and Greece is our ward. If we obey a popular demand which springs from ignorance of the situation—depose Constantine, and seize the country—every neutral nation will say at once that we are treating Greece as Germany treated Belgium—that the *Entente* is no better than Germany, and that we are all a parcel of cutthroats together. We shall lose favor, sympathy, and support in the very quarters where we need the most. It will lead to greater restrictions upon our purchases in the United States. I am aware that many of you consider the demands of the war situation paramount to every other feature, and I am quite sure that another

man in the Foreign Office would have far more popular support. So I have tendered my resignation—as final." (There was a murmur of sympathy and approval; none better knew than the statesmen in that room how much England owed Sir Edward Wray through long years of stress and underhand danger. The new Premier began at once to outline the differences in viewpoint.)

"My Lord, when a ward rebels against the authority of his guardian—defies and betrays him—the common law upholds the guardian and compels obedience. Constantine has defied the *Entente* and tried to side with its enemies—in much the same manner as the *Sinn Fein* rebels in Dublin—repudiating his written pledges to Serbia —his obligations to England, France, and Russia. We've been handling him with gloves regardless of the danger to ourselves—just because we are civilized nations desiring the respect and support of other civilized nations. As a consequence, our forbearance has cost us Serbia, Montenegro, most of Albania, the *Oriental Railway*, and now half of Roumania! Sarrail's army of half a million men has been kept marking time for a year—useless, because it could not take the offensive with the Greek danger in its rear. When nations are fighting for their very existence, there comes a time when they must protect themselves regardless of any opinion their actions may arouse in other nations not in possession of all the facts! I think I speak for everyone present when I say that I regret Your Lordship's giving up the portfolio and am keenly aware of the services you've rendered England. Balfour, will *you* take the Foreign Office? You had it several years ago and you have the popular confidence to a marked ex-

tent. You accept? Good! Dyvnaint, we want you for the Admiralty——"

"Deuced kind of you, sir—but it would be a mistake!"

"Why so? Your naval and aërial exploits are known all over Europe! It will prove a most popular appointment!"

"Possibly; but it would prevent my serving England in other ways known to three or four of these gentlemen—serving in a far more vital way than I could as *First Lord*. There are dangers which never appear until awfter the catastrophe happens, don't you know—an' I've personally been the means of avertin' so many of 'em during the past fifteen years that I know better where to hunt for them than almost any one else in the Governm'nt, d'ye see? While I'm mentioning the subject, I wish to say this: A request from me for the instant coöperation of the Foreign Office, the Adm'r'lty, the Board of Trade, or the Home Office should be understood to mean business when I make it. His Majesty—Wray—Balfour—Curzon—will all tell you that the work I've been doing is of the very first importance to England. I'm spending my own fortune like water—risking my life constantly—doing it with the utmost willingness an' pleasure. But I must have prompt and unlimited support, or there'll be catastrophes which'll be felt in our farthermost colonies." (The Prime Minister frowned slightly, as he tried to stifle the cough which shook him. This sounded rather dictatorial from a man who wouldn't accept a portfolio.)

"H-m-m; suppose we consider it wiser, for what seem good reasons, to withhold that support in some instances, My Lord? What will you do—go ahead without it?"

"Undoubtedly. Án' your Ministry won't lawst forty-eight hours! That's not a threat, sir; it's a statement of fact. You're trying to form a business Governm'nt here, to-night—a Governm'nt whose very existence is dependent upon *efficiency*. I've been doing things for England for many years, an' the fact that you never heard of 'em rawther implies that I'm not much of a talker. Were you to antagonize such services as mine, you'd commit a ruinously fatal blunder right at the start of your administration."

"Er—would Your Lordship mind describing those services more definitely—so that we may form some estimate of their value?"

"Not for a million sterling! Ask His Majesty, if you like; or Alfonzo of Spain—Nicholas of Russia—Poincaré—Vittoré Emanuéle. They'll give you no details—but they'll suggest rawther plainly that it'll be advisable to give me whatever support I ask—unofficially. Come, sir—we're wasting time! We'd best consider this point settled an' go on to the next one! I'd suggest Jellicoe as *First Lord*, but I know you're prejudiced in favor of a civilian. What's the matter with Carson, here? He's a capital organizer, an' immensely popular."

For a moment, the man of the people and the descendant of the Crusaders looked each other in the eye—appraisingly. There was in the Earl of Dyvnaint a force—initiative, and a mental quickness which surprised the Premier considerably. Here was an English peer—supposed to be encrusted with all the reserve, the courtesy, and the hide-bound conservatism of his class—handling a situation with a snap and an apparent consciousness of

reserve power not to be ignored. The new Prime Minister recognized a force which must be invaluable to his Ministry—or land it on the rocks if interfered with. He didn't attempt to deceive himself for more than a few moments. This courteous gentleman—with a world-wide reputation as a sport-loving peer having no head for State affairs—was really a man whose power and influence seemed a bit startling. They were intangible. It spoke volumes for the Minister's real statesmanship that he was able to accept Trevor at his implied valuation, promising whatever support he needed, and proceed rapidly with the formation of his Cabinet—which was practically completed before sunrise.

As the conference broke up, Trevor drew Wray and Balfour aside—asking them what they knew of a recently arrived attaché of the Russian Embassy in Belgrave Square, Major Stefen Lupokovitch. Wray said that his information went no further than the man's duly-presented credentials on file in the Foreign Office, but Mr. Balfour was of the impression that he had seen the man before.

"He is older than he appears, Trevor. I had the *Downing Street* portfolio in '78—Lupokovitch reminds me of a man who was mixed up in some Berlin intrigue at that time—in fact, I'd almost swear to him. His mother was the old Gräfin von Husstadt, who had a big house in Charlottenburg. Seems to me I recollect an intimacy with Stuermer, who was recently the Russian premier."

"Hmph! That rawther bears out my own opinion of the fellow! I say, Balfour! I fancy I'll try a bit of experiment to see if I can't find out where he really stands,

don't you know. You can help me, if you will. I'll tell the chap, at St. James's Club, that I'm giving an American friend a card to him—Arthur Trevelyan—fine old estate on the south slope of Dartmoor. Trevelyan invites him to dine with you an' Lammerford—little private dinner at the *Cecil* to get a line on the proper men to approach for the purchase of American motor-cars. You fix it up with the Premier to look in on us, casually, at a certain time. I've an idea there may be inducements which 'll make that bounder talk. If he does, we're likely to hear something of interest, I fancy."

Could the new Premier have had a cinema picture of Earl Trevor's mental processes, there never would have been a moment's question as to granting him the fullest possible Government support without any time-wasting request for details. Concerning the attaché who had been accredited to the Russian Embassy during the previous month, His Lordship knew absolutely nothing prejudicial —but he had seen him dining, one evening, at one of the less prominent hotels, with a Dublin barrister whose clients were intensely anti-English in their sympathies. There had been nothing of record against the barrister himself except the practice which seemed to seek him unasked. Balfour's recollection of the old scandal in Berlin, if it really concerned the same man, made his vague suspicions stronger. He now began to anticipate developments at the proposed dinner which had seemed mere idle speculation before.

When Major Lupokovitch learned that an American desired commercial information which might put a number of fat commissions in his pocket, there was no trouble in

arranging the affair—and after the five met at the *Cecil* (Grantham, the chemist, being also of the party), the earlier stages of the dinner passed very pleasantly. Mr. Trevelyan, being an excellent *raconteur*, proved a most entertaining host—and was ably seconded by the statesman and Baron Lammerford. Lupokovitch himself, though naturally taciturn and unusually conservative for a Russian, recalled several amusing anecdotes as his contribution.

As the coffee and cigars appeared, a page came in with a message that someone desired to speak with the Foreign Secretary for a moment—and that gentleman presently brought in the Premier as a temporary addition to the party.

The talk had drifted around to the Russian demand for American motor-cars and the proper men to approach in Petrograd. Lupokovitch's conservatism was now quite evident. He mentioned one or two names—but suggested that Trevelyan call upon him a few days later, after he'd had time to cable some inquiries. Upon the two statesmen, the impression he produced was that of a crafty diplomat whom nothing could surprise into saying more than he intended—and this was after he had consumed fully a quart of wine.

Noticing that his first cigar had burned more than half its length, Trevelyan drew a handsome case from his pocket and asked the Russian to try one of his own special importation. The others were more leisurely smokers than the Major. By the time they were ready for a second cigar, nobody noticed that the black morocco case which Trevelyan handed them had been taken from another

pocket. All of them commented upon the unusually rich flavor of the tobacco—which gave Trevelyan the chance to describe for several moments the plantation from which it came and the care with which the cigars were especially made for him in Havana. When he finished, the Major had smoked a third of his cigar. He was apparently relaxing more unguardedly to the influence of the dinner and the wine he had taken.

Presently he broke into the talk with a scandalous anecdote concerning his immediate chief—the Russian Ambassador. It was so entirely undiplomatic that, if the Premier hadn't been previously warned, he must have betrayed surprise by his facial expression. Trevelyan matched this by anecdotes of certain English statesmen who were supposedly recognizable, though he mentioned no names. And the Russian came back with a remark about German intrigue in Petrograd.

Knowing that extremes were probably safe enough by this time, Trevelyan carelessly remarked:

"I suppose the old *Green Circle* was pretty thoroughly wiped out by General Lipowski, last January—when he was acting Chief of Police?"

The Major laughed—loudly and sneeringly. A growing excitement was evident in the expression of his eyes—in his gestures—the tone of his voice.

"Serge Lipowski has but a little while to live, *mon ami!* He controls the Russian secret police, to-day—he is the man in the saddle. Three hundred better men than he are rotting in the mines of Siberia since that betrayal, nearly a year ago. But there were fifty whom he didn't get, and two of them were the originators of the

*Green Circle.* They've not been idle during the year. There are now ten in the inner circle which works out the plans and gives the orders. Under them is the outer circle—numbering four hundred and fifty—including many in the *Congress of Nobles*, which is the oldest and most powerful organization in all Russia and which has just voted to continue the war indefinitely. We have our agents in their most secret councils! Outside of these four hundred and sixty, we have upward of five thousand sworn associates who will either carry out instructions themselves or look the other way when certain things are done in the departments or bureaus for which they are responsible.

"Just at present, we've met with a slight reverse in the removal of Stuermer and the appointment of Trepoff. Stuermer contrived to block the army plans and muddle the munition-supply until it was too late to give Roumania any effective assistance. Just now Trepoff is hurrying, day and night, to hold the German armies down there, and force them back before they dig in for the winter. But Rasputin, the monk, has been planning with the German party in Petrograd to lay a trap for Trepoff which must force his resignation—and then put in an even stronger man than Stuermer as premier. You will see! In spite of anything the Duma and the Moujiks can do, we'll beat them and make a separate peace with Germany before spring!

"The proposals now coming from Germany to the *Entente* apparently give Russia very much the worst of it—no restoration of territory or other compensation. But it is well understood in Petrograd that Germany will give us the whole of Roumania, neutralize the Bosphorus and

Dardanelles so that we have an unrestricted outlet there, and guarantee us the whole of Persia, if we name a separate peace and desert the *Entente*. Poland is to be granted autonomy by both empires—but with as many Russian officials in the government as Germans." (Here "Trevelyan" inquired:)

"Who are the men in Petrograd with whom we Irish in Dublin and the United States should get in touch? We are in position to render you considerable assistance at some critical moment, you know, and I expect to be in Petrograd myself, very soon."

"Capital, my friend! Capital! You know some of the *Green Circle* recognition-signs and passwords—yes?"

"Oh, I know how to lay a cigar upon a table and slice off the end with my pocket-knife—the smallest blade. I know how to cross one leg over the other when I am seated, and when two fingers of my left hand are crossed. I know when to say *Zdoroveh—Schahstieh*—and when to say *Dlinneeh Zhihzn*, instead."

"Then there is but one thing more which you must do to meet those who will coöperate with you at every turn. You will obtain letters of introduction to Count Boris Gazonoff, General Ivan Ossipovitch or Baron Stellanovski. They are all supposed to be intensely anti-German in spite of the Saxon and Prussian intermarriages in their families, and any one from outside who wishes to confer with the *Green Circle* must be given further introductions through them or fall immediately under suspicion. When quite sure that you are 'lone with eizer of zem, you will slowly remove left glove—catch by tip' of two long'st fingers—shlap zhe palm of right han' wizh it, before put-

tin' glove in lef' trouzhers pocket. Ha-ha-ha! Simple 'nough thing—eh, *m'ami?* An' yet—it—simple 'nough shing—an' yet—it—wha' was it I w's goin' shay! Ah! Shimple—shing—yet—been loshing too much sheep—of late! Shimple sing—an' zyet—mph—mph!"

Lupokovitch's arms rested upon the table, and his head now dropped forward upon them. He was breathing heavily, with a peculiar gasp. Trevelyan came around the table and shook the unconscious figure, but without rousing it in the least. Then he turned to the Prime Minister, who was becoming seriously alarmed.

"He'll come out of it in an hour or so without remembering anything that happened—you understand, of course, that I gave him a drugged cigar! We'll carry him into the next room until this one can be thoroughly aired—I don't care to risk even the fumes from that cigar in a close room. We'll come back and work over him here—but at the last moment, I fancy we'd better let him come out of it as if he'd merely dropped asleep while talking with us."

"You—er—fancy any reliance is to be placed upon what he said, Mr. Trevelyan? It's rather incredible, you know!"

"The man was perfectly unconscious of what he was saying, sir—emptying his mind of all he'd been keeping bottled up in it at the suggestion conveyed by my questions, and under the influence of a very powerful drug. You may be quite certain that what he said has been filling his mind for months. I've a memorandum of the names he mentioned—and I think I'd better leave for Petrograd with Earl Trevor and Baron Lammerford as early in the morning as the Admiralty can give us one of the

big cruising submarines. That's the quickest way to get there—some risk, going through the Cattegat, but we must chance that!"

"But—but—what do you and Dyvnaint expect to accomplish in Petrograd, Mr. Trevelyan? If the intrigue there is as widespread as this man said, what can three of you possibly do?"

"Something along the line of what His Lordship recently did in Roumania and Sweden, sir! Do you suppose his Earldom was given him for nothing! Petrograd is, today, a worse hotbed of intrigue than Stamboul was in the days of Hassan Bey and Midhat Pasha. We've been congratulating ourselves upon the prompt and emphatic repudiation of the German peace proposals by the Duma and the Congress of Nobles—but we do not dare overlook the fact that there may be another upheaval there tomorrow which will again place German influence uppermost. A blow must be struck in Roumania and the Odessa region by the Russian army before it is too late! The men in England best fitted to cope with this peculiar sort of problem must have transportation, funds, Government backing, the very instant we ask for it. You're something of a hustler yourself, sir—and must see the force of this!"

That England's new Premier did see it was shown by the hearty coöperation he ever afterward gave in everything concerning Lord Trevor and his unknown activities. But since that evening, and though he has been present at several dinners where Mr. Arthur Trevelyan also was a guest, he has never smoked another cigar given him by the wealthy American. He accepted Trevelyan's explanation of how he had substituted the duplicate cigar case—ad-

mired his clever sleight-of-hand—but he doesn't like to think of what might have happened had the American miscalculated somewhere. As Trevelyan walked away from the *Cecil* with Grantham that night—the two statesmen having volunteered to drop the sleepy and unsuspicious Russian in Belgrave Square—he said:

"I hope the use to which we put your chemical discovery meets with your approval, old chap, and that you don't regret selling the formula to His Lordship? He doped those cigars and gave them to me, so the secret is known to nobody except you two."

"H-m-m; this demonstration, to-night, was successful even beyond my anticipations! I've been a student of psychology all my life. That Major Lupokovitch had his tongue about as perfectly under control as it is possible for any human being to have it. If the stuff will loosen up a mind like that, there's practically nothing in that line it *won't* do! It's even more dangerous than I supposed! You and His Lordship intend using it in Petrograd, I infer? H-m-m—if it proves as valuable to the British Government there as it did this evening, I'm more than satisfied to have the formula in Trevor's hands. I've known him a good many years—he's a man of honor. But I'll tell you one thing—if you happen to be interrupted by some outsider while having a private conference with a Russian who is under the influence of that residuum at the moment, I wouldn't give a sixpence for your lives! The man must have time to recover in a natural manner—or else he's bound to suspect that he's been drugged. From my observations, so far, the subject regains consciousness without a trace of recollection—but human brains aren't

all alike. You *may* strike someone who will retain a vague impression of having been tampered with. However—I'm beginning to suspect that you and His Lordship play a far bigger, more deadly game, than I'd ever dreamed. Risks that would bother me a lot are all in the cards to you. I've a pretty close mouth—you need have no fear of indiscretion upon my part."

Now, as everyone knows—if they follow the war-news closely—the Cattegat and all the southern passages between the North Sea and the Baltic are so thickly sown with mines as to shut off marine intercourse to every nation except Germany and Sweden. The passage between the Danish Islands, known as the Grosserbelt, with its narrow opening, the Grön-Sund, was mined by Denmark at the beginning of the war. The Ore-Sund, between Denmark and the Swedish coast, was recently mined by Sweden in its narrowest part—though the *Entente* and the neutral nations protested against this—and Germany has filled the southern opening of the Sund with floating mines that frequently go adrift with as much danger to German shipping as to any other. So the Baltic is now supposed to be closed to outside navigation. In spite of this, however, Swedish and Danish pilots do occasionally take a cargo-boat safely through the mine-fields—for a large consideration. And English submarines six or eight fathoms under the surface easily slip through by going so slowly that they are able to see and avoid the anchor-chains or wire cables which hold the mines in place.

About noon of the day following the dinner-party at the *Cecil* a big cruising submarine left Portsmouth with

the Earl of Dyvnaint, Baron Lammerford, and Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan aboard. With one or two narrow escapes in going through the mine-fields, it made a quick passage into the Baltic, anchoring in open water just off the island fortress of Kronstadt, from where the three motored into Petrograd over the ice.

Before going to the British Embassy on the *Quai du Palais*, they called upon M. Pokrovski at the Imperial Foreign Office and presented their special-mission credentials which had been hastily prepared for them by Secretary Balfour in *Downing Street*. As the only place in Petrograd where they could be reasonably sure of escaping police surveillance was their own Embassy, they took up temporary quarters there with Sir George Buchanan—and, as it was of the utmost importance that they get in touch with the Russian secret police immediately, they decided to attend a reception ball at the French Embassy, where General Serge Lipowski was sure to appear some time before midnight.

It was but a short walk along the *Quais* to the French Embassy, after dinner. The building was filled with one of the most brilliantly dressed and cosmopolitan assemblages they had ever seen—among whom each of the three found many old acquaintances. About eleven, a well-built man with an iron-gray fringe surrounding the bald spot on his elongated skull came up to Lord Trevor, in a corner of the ballroom, with extended hand. He was dressed in a uniform less conspicuous than most of the others, but instantly recognized as that of the dreaded Imperial Secret Police.

"This is a very pleasant surprise, Your Lordship! I've been wishing for many months to apologize for exiling your protégé, Mr. Silas Bartlett, last year. It was quite unavoidable, you see, because the man—like other headstrong Americans—would persist in compromising himself with some of the most dangerous conspirators in Petrograd."

They were standing where a low remark apparently could not be overheard, but Trevor smilingly switched the talk into Hindustani which he knew General Lipowski understood fairly well.

"We brought three other men like Bartlett from *Downing Street* in the submarine, General. To be quite frank with you, I stumbled upon rather serious information in London concerning the old *Green Circle.* It has more members and associates now than it had a year ago. Your wholesale clean-up put an end to its activities for several months—but you know better than I do that matters have been going wrong here under the surface.

"Now—either Baron Lammerford or I will introduce two of those men to you at our Embassy, to-morrow, if you'll call upon us there. The third, we will hold in reserve for the present, until we see where he can be used to advantage; but you'd better *visé* his papers so that he may go and come without interference. We'll have to work in our own way, upon the special information we've obtained—but we'll need your coöperation and protection at every point. Do we get it? You know what our assistance was worth last year!"

"I've not forgotten that, Your Lordship. Neither you nor your men will have anything to fear from the police,

and you will receive all the assistance it is possible for us to give. Of course, if your men intend worming their way into the *Green Circle*, there will be hours when it will be difficult if not impossible for us to protect them—but we're all taking chances these days. I will call at the Embassy to-morrow. If your men will return with me to the Bureau, my lieutenants will observe them carefully and instruct them in signals for assistance in emergency."

Later, when the Earl stood talking with a Grand Duchess—one of the handsomest women in all Russia—she indicated, by a slight gesture, a man of medium size in a very ornate uniform, who was standing near them. Lowering her voice to a confidential tone, she said:

"There is a man who promises to go far if his remarkable development continues. He is Count Boris Gazonoff—a man of influence in the *General Congress of the Association of Nobility*—who is showing a capacity in the way of organization which makes him one of the most valuable executives in the Department of Ways of Communication. His genius in that line has been recognized during the last forty-eight hours by an appointment which gives him practically control of the railway traffic management. With a man like General Ivan Ossipovitch as Assistant Director of Munitions and Supplies, there will be a straightening-out of the conflicting departmental orders which have so muddled things that one army after another has been forced to retreat from strong positions for lack of supplies at the critical moment."

In a second or two Earl Trevor recognized the names as two of the three *Green Circle* chiefs mentioned by Ma-

jor Lupokovitch and as being the real heads of the *Camarilla.*

"H-m-m—as Your Highness says, Russia needs that sort of men to handle war problems in a businesslike way. And you must not criticise too harshly if it takes him a little time to reorganize——"

"Oh—one cannot expect the traffic blunders to stop in a day, or a month—the system is too vast a one. (One moment! When I catch the Count's eye, I'll present him to you.)"

During the conversation with Gazonoff, His Lordship understood, indirectly, that the Count was accustomed to go over State papers in his own library every afternoon—and inferred that he denied himself to practically all callers during that time. At four, the next afternoon, a stylish motor landaulet rolled up to the Count's residence on the Kamennoi Ostrow—(an island in the Neva given over exclusively to palatial mansions of the aristocracy)—and two well-dressed gentlemen sent in their cards, with one from Major Stefan Lupokovitch—Attaché of the Russian Embassy in London—introducing them. After a short delay the Count received them in his private library—and they had been alone with him scarcely ten minutes when he smilingly accepted them as would-be associates of the dreaded and famous *Green Circle.* Trevor was now wearing a dark Van Dyck beard and moustache. He was apparently two inches shorter and forty pounds heavier, and he had the yellowing complexion of one with a congested liver. His French and Russian were so perfect that he might have claimed either country as his own—but he said that he was really a Dublin

man of wide acquaintance in every part of the world. Lammerford, who had impersonated a French colonel of engineers during a previous three months in Russia, was now an Irish-American broker with enough money at his command to finance an expedition to the west coast of Ireland.

After they had edged the talk a little nearer the paramount object of the conference, Gazonoff himself suggested an end to the fencing.

"We're only wasting time, gentlemen! You've satisfied me that you are exactly what you claim to be—and you wouldn't have presented Lupokovitch's card or obtained this interview if there had been any doubt in your minds as to where *my* secret interests really lie. My mother was a Prussian Countess, related to the kaiser, if you need a further guarantee. Now suppose we get down to a definite understanding! Just how do you think you can help us? Or—if it is the other way round—just what coöperation can we, or should we, give you?"

"Er—well, it seemed to us that we might work together to our mutual advantage. We can start a formidable rising in the south of Ireland within twenty-four hours of the time we succeed in landing two shiploads of arms in some cove on the west coast. But we must have an understanding with Berlin that our steamers will not be sunk by submarines, en route. They will be plainly marked, and Von Bernstorf will know when they sneak out of their American port. Furthermore, in order to make the blow most effective, it must be timed to follow very closely some Russian disaster—some disaster which will release a lot of German divisions from the east front

and put them in France so suddenly that the full English force will be needed to strengthen their lines. You can easily see that a serious revolution in Ireland, coming at such a time, is likely to completely disorganize British plans. That and your Russian disaster will dishearten the *Entente* everywhere—it will immensely strengthen your pro-German peace party here—possibly enable you to pull off a *coup d'état* and get control of things.

"If you think favorably of our plan, I think we should have a clear understanding of what you are in a position to do here and meet a number of your associates—with whom we may communicate as to various details when the dual arrangements are complete. It would, of course, help us materially if you could smuggle a few thousand men over to the United States, or put us in touch with Germans there who might be willing to venture on our Irish expedition. Additional money will also help—though we are prepared to go ahead if we don't scrape up another rouble."

Gazonoff was more than pleased. He had not supposed it possible that anything like a serious rebellion would be attempted in Ireland for some time, considering the Dublin fiasco, and it occurred to him that the *Green Circle* could scarcely make a better investment than appropriating a couple of million roubles for such an enterprise. He intimated as much—but mentioned only two or three of the names which Trevor had hoped to get. In a few moments the Earl decided to risk one of the drugged cigars and offered it—apparently taking another, from the same case, for himself.

The result exceeded even his expectations. For twenty

minutes the Count—with no consciousness of what he was doing—poured out such a mass of Russo-German intrigue that they had difficulty in jotting down the essential points as he spoke. Among other things, he described in detail just how nineteen trainloads of munitions and food for the armies in Roumania were to be sent wandering over Central Asia through a confusion of orders—at a time when it would cause the certain defeat of those armies, or their hopeless retreat. Finally he fell into so heavy a stupor that they feared a weak heart might have been fatally affected by the drug.

Assuming that several of his household must be agents of the *Green Circle*, it seemed exceedingly dangerous to risk their coming in unexpectedly and finding him in such a condition. So they touched a push-button on the wall, and when his private secretary answered the call, said that he had been attacked by a fainting-spell while talking with them. The secretary admitted that the Count was a heavy smoker who, occasionally, had functional trouble with his heart; but after they had unfastened his collar and forced a few drops of aromatic ammonia between his lips, he slowly regained consciousness.

When Gazonoff began to feel himself again, he was quite annoyed at what he supposed a seizure caused by temporarily impaired digestion. He scouted the idea that there was anything wrong with his heart and sent his secretary out of the room—after which he took from a drawer of his desk a box of black cigars. As he was clipping the end of one Trevor drew a morocco case from his pocket and opened it.

"Er—one moment, Your Excellency! Your health

and clear brain are too valuable to our cause to risk any needless tampering with them. After such a fainting-spell as you've just had one of those black cigars might injure you seriously—and, with all due respect to your tobacco importer, I'm quite sure you'll find these milder ones of much better flavor. They're specially made for me in Havana at twenty guineas the hundred."

The Count accepted another long cigar and lighted it —his face expressing intense satisfaction as he drew in the first puffs. Then his visitors got up to leave, saying they would call again within a few days. The cigar was something better than Gazonoff had ever smoked in his life—putting him in such a thoroughly contented frame of mind that he walked out through the main hall with them as far as the *porte-cochère.*

When they were rolling back to the *Quai du Palais,* a *Downing Street* man from the Embassy acting as chauffeur, Lammerford asked:

"What in heaven's name did you do that for! Everyone in the house is sure to know we've drugged him, now!"

"Not as I figure it, Lammy—though I'll admit there's some risk! In this morocco case there were four cigars—each of them loaded with fifty grains of the stuff—a dose that would kill an ox, according to Jimmy Grantham—particularly a man with Gazonoff's weak heart. Before we were off the Island, I fancy he was trampin' up an' down that hall, yellin' out everything he knew at the top of his voice. His secretary an' servants'll be paralyzed with fear for about two minutes; then they'll grab an' gag him, thinkin' the man has suddenly gone crazy. He'll die in their

arms. There'll be no trace of poison in him for an autopsy to show—any physician in Petrograd will call it a case of tobacco-heart. An' those nineteen trainloads of munitions for the armies in Roumania will *not* be back-tracked into Central Asia! I'll give Serge Lipowski enough of a hint to make jolly well sure they won't! When Gazonoff told us how nearly that plan was completed, I knew he'd have to go before we left that house! With the fate of nations at stake one doesn't consider individual traitors of that stamp! An' we've our work cut out for us, 'Lammy!' I fancied we might go back in a fortn't or so—but it'll be a longer job than that. We've a business Govern-m'nt at home now—things should move with a more relentless purpose; an' I fancy we can do more for England right here, in the next month or so, than anywhere else on the globe!"

## CHAPTER X

### THE BREEDING OF SUSPICION

EARL TREVOR and Baron Lammerford were frequent and immensely popular visitors in Petrograd —Sir Abdool, almost as much so. But they were known entirely in their social and official capacity, as naval and army officers—sport-loving peers—with neither taste nor ability for politics of any sort. It is true that they were sometimes intrusted with special missions by their Government—as in the present case, where they brought with them three brilliant secret-service men from *Downing Street* to work with General Lipowski's police in checking the German intrigue. But what Lipowski never knew was the fact that they, themselves, were the secret agents—and so carefully did they alternate their work that one or two of them were usually in evidence at the Embassy or calling upon some well-known personage at a time when all three of the *Downing Street* men were supposed to be working in disguise under the surface.

Two nights after Gazonoff's startling death there was a reception at the British Embassy, during which they were introduced to several of the nobility whom they had not previously met. The Princess Xenia Tarazine—who claimed lineal descent from Ghenghis Khan and was said to be worth over two hundred and fifty million

roubles—found Earl Trevor the most fascinating man of her entire acquaintance and tried to secure a promise that he would drop in upon her for tea the next afternoon. His Lordship regretted that previous engagements prevented his calling before the end of the week, but said that an American friend of his, then in Petrograd, was very anxious to meet her, and asked if he might give Mr. McMurtagh a card. Having no suspicion that Count Gazonoff, while under the influence of a drugged cigar, had mentioned her as one of the *Camarilla*—and being in the mood to grant Trevor almost anything he asked—she at once consented to receive his friend next day.

When the Honorable Aloysius presented himself in the drawing room of her luxurious Tudor palace on the Kamennoi Ostrow (literally, "Stony Island"), she was positive they had never met before, though he mentioned so many mutual acquaintances that it seemed odd they had never happened upon each other. Unconsciously comparing the two men, she fancied McMurtagh shorter and heavier than Earl Trevor. He wore a close-clipped moustache—had dark hair and a swarthy complexion—a distinguished-looking man in any company, and nobody's fool. Without knowing just why, she liked him at once—unreservedly—as did her other guests.

He outstayed the other callers and, by secret recognition-signs, convinced her that he was affiliated with the *Green Circle*—saying that he had sought the interview to warn her of the compromising things Gazonoff had said before he died. McMurtagh gave her the impression that the work of the *Green Circle* was really repugnant to him

—which confirmed in her a growing distaste for the German intrigue—and she finally invited him to remain for a week or two as one of her house-guests.

That night the monk, Rasputin, came to her palace and insulted every woman in it by dancing a semi-religious interpretation known as the *Khylsty*. With McMurtagh and young Prince Kussopoff, who had recently married into the imperial family, she decided that the monk was no longer tolerable in Petrograd. McMurtagh's idea was to capture the man—shave him until he was unrecognizable—and have Lipowski's police railroad him to Siberia. But in carrying this out, Rasputin became suspicious—shot one of the Prince's servants—and was himself killed by a young English Countess who had consented to act as their decoy, after the monk had brutally knocked her down. Which brings us to the day after his death—the Honorable Aloysius having endeared himself to Kussupoff and the Princess Xenia as a companion-in-arms upon whom they might depend to the limit, under any circumstances.

All Petrograd was seething over the assassination, none doubting that the intriguing monk had been treacherously done to death, and the half-dozen people who knew how it had accidentally come about were keeping that information to themselves for perfectly obvious reasons. After the first rumors, there was a general disinclination to believe that the well-hated power behind the throne was really dead. His killing had been unsuccessfully attempted upon more than one occasion, with disastrous results for the would-be executioners. But General Lipowski's police had chopped a hole in the Neva ice, lowered a

diver through it and recovered a body that was unquestionably that of Gregory Rasputin.

On the surface, the affair was scarcely more than a three-day scandal—shoved into the background by other startling occurrences. The monk was dead; it was apparently impossible to discover his assassins. In the political undercurrents of the Russian capital, however, the matter was destined to arouse deadly suspicion among several groups of conspirators and, as time went on, to develop intrigue within intrigue until the infamous *Green Circle* was shaken to its outermost periphery.

This influence began to develop in the Tarazine Palace within a few hours after Rasputin's body had been recovered from under the ice.

McMurtagh had breakfasted with the Princess Xenia in her private suite, in order that she might be given sufficient information to prevent young Prince Kussupoff's arrest. With the exception of the Prince's three servants and the English Countess, they were the only people in Petrograd who knew of the original plan to shave Rasputin and have him sent to the Siberian mines—who knew that he had been really shot by Countess Wirdovski, after he had brutally knocked her down. But five of the other house-guests happened to be members of the *Green Circle* and had heard Xenia thank Prince Kussupoff for driving the monk out of her palace, after the revolting dance which he had performed.

Hence, when the fact of his death had been established, they began comparing notes. They hinted various suspicions guardedly to a few others—who casually happened in after dinner that evening. McMurtagh, nobody ap-

peared to connect with the affair at all. He had but recently arrived from America, was known to be conferring with *Green Circle* leaders upon an Irish uprising timed to follow a German *coup d'état* in Petrograd, and was not supposed to have had any interest in the monk, one way or another. Prince Kussupoff was, at the moment, on the train to join his imperial wife in the Crimea, a fact which the Princess Xenia carelessly mentioned as though all must be aware of it.

For an hour after dinner the conversation in the great hall of the palace, where everyone had gone to smoke, was confined to general topics. But after the few loyal Russian callers had taken their leave, the talk became more explosive. Hints and thinly veiled accusations went back and forth like *ripostes* in a fencing-match. It was Grand Duke Feodor who presently became more personal in his insinuations.

"This is the worst blow our organization has yet received! We could have better spared any one rather than Rasputin! The man had his faults and was a moujik, as everyone knows—but he was the only one who could always influence the Emperor against any particular statesman in public office. Every time the Progressives —curse them—have managed to seat a premier or foreign secretary, Rasputin has unseated him by working upon His Majesty's weak points, and we've nobody left for that sort of work! We'll know, sooner or later, who were responsible for his shooting—and I promise you they'll follow him without delay! Aye, even if the evidence points to some who are here at this moment, regardless of sex!"

The Princess Xenia lighted a cigarette and blew a little smoke toward the Grand Duke with unmistakable insolence. He was an unbidden guest that evening—never a welcome one.

"Meaning me—Feodor Feodorovitch?"

"Meaning any one implicated in that murder—even thou, Xenia Tarazine!"

"Hmph! Almost, I am persuaded to say I did it! I'm really curious to know what you'd do—how you'd go about it—and how many minutes you'd live—afterward. My servants wouldn't hesitate about killing you, even if some of my guests did! It was hinted to me, this morning, that the fellow was killed unintentionally—during an attempt to exile him to Siberia. Had that been carried out, I should have most heartily approved. He was getting to be an unbearable offense in Petrograd—too much of a one to be received in any decent house.

"And I'll confess that I'm disgusted with the whole of this German intrigue. There are nations in the world, today, which are doing unbelievable things—committing crimes that would make a Cossack tremble with fear of the hereafter! There can be no possible advantage to the nobility of Russia in being affiliated with them. I'm conscious of burning shame for such association—and though I've no intention of denouncing others among us who have been equally to blame in this matter, I wish it distinctly understood that I have no further interest in the *Camarilla*—the *Green Circle*—or their objects!"

There was a sinister murmur from three of the men present; the Grand Duke's face slowly darkened.

"So! You would defy the *Green Circle* and expect to

live! You would stand aside—refuse to assist, either with your fortune or your personal influence! Others have died for less—much less—considering what you might betray if the whim seized you!"

"If the whim seizes me, Feodor Feodorovitch, rest assured that I shall say what I wish to say, concerning any one; and neither thou nor others in the *Circle* will remove me one moment before my allotted time. What is written—will be! Your Highness, I wrote out a list of several hundred names, this morning, with an accompanying statement, and placed it, sealed, beyond your reach. It is supposed to be a codicil to my will. Within an hour after my death or disappearance is reported, it will be opened and read by men whose loyalty to Russia has been tested a hundred times. I am a noble, of Tartar blood, and I do not betray my Order unless it threatens the existence or welfare of my country. You will be wise if you do not proceed to extremes which bring that conviction home to me. What I don't know, I can't judge. But don't forget that list in the hands of my executors! Who knows what names or what proofs of treason may be found in that document if I should disappear suddenly?"

The Grand Duke was almost beside himself, but upon his forehead and those of the others beads of perspiration began to gather.

"Curse you, Xenia! I believe you shot Rasputin yourself!"

The Honorable Aloysius had been an interested listener in one corner, but the talk appeared to be reaching a point where anything might happen if the strain increased. Lighting a cigar, he interrupted with a good-natured drawl:

"If your organization has a secret service, as one infers it *must* have, I fancy you're rather badly served by it—because I stumbled upon a few bits of information yesterday which convinced me that your scoundrelly monk was selling you out. If you are good judges of character, you must have seen that the fellow was fairly insane in his desire for power. And knowing that fact, it would occur to an onlooker like myself that he stood to gain a lot more from the Czar and the Russian Government than from Germany. When this war is over, Russia will continue to exist as she did before. She may be more powerful—or less—but I fancy even the kaiser hardly expects to control her entirely, unless he's an utter fool. Your monk expected to remain here in the Russian Court, of course. Well, he had more to sell the Czar than he had to sell your organization—and stood to gain far more by it."

It was apparent that some, if not all of the men, didn't relish this suggestion or such interference upon the part of a mere visitor in Russia—an outsider, even though he might be a prospective fellow conspirator. They listened with ill-concealed impatience and disbelief.

"It is easy, Sir American, to accuse a dead man of treachery!"

"Yes—you were sure to say that, of course. But, one moment! Last evening I was passing a house in the old quarter of the city—the sort of place which might be occupied by a tradesman in good circumstances and which becomes a lodging-house ast he neighborhood deteriorates. Rasputin came out of that house in a sneaking sort of way that made me step back for a better look at the place. In about three minutes General Serge Lipowski—who, I

understand, is the responsible man behind the Russian Police—came out in much the same manner and went off in the opposite direction.

"This morning I was introduced to a young officer who supposed me unquestionably on the side of the *Entente.* He was so full of a rumor he'd heard that he couldn't help repeating it to us—a rumor that Lipowski had discovered a plot to cut the trusses of a long Volga railway bridge with oxy-acetylene, and send half a dozen supply trains racing down to it from those munition factories along the river, in response to a hurry-up telegram from the front. Of course, the first train will smash through into the river, but everyone along that section of the line is in the plot and no warning will be sent back to the following trains.

"The cavalry captain who told us the story said the information came to Lipowski from one of the most prominent men in the reactionary party—a man probably connected with the mysterious *Green Circle*—and that preparations have been made not only to repair the bridge before those trains are sent over it, but to arrest more than a hundred people implicated in the plot.

"Now, I'm an outsider, as you say—not entirely in your confidence as yet. But I've heard enough to know the destruction of those munition trains was planned in just about that way; and I suggest that General Ossipovitch, who I understand has succeeded Count Gazonoff in handling the transportation system, make himself noticeably active in getting those particular trains to the Roumanian armies in the shortest possible time. If any of you see him to-night, you'd best tell him what I've said.

Lipowski won't dare arrest those hundred people under suspicion without more tangible evidence than he yet has. Lie low on this munition-train proposition awhile; then perfect some other plan."

McMurtagh's manner was quiet but convincing. They began to think he might prove a valuable addition to the *Green Circle* after all. Here was a man who kept himself alert in a city which was strange to him—where he had but a rudimentary knowledge of the language. He had spoken in French, that his choice of words might not lead to any possible misunderstanding—and the circumstantial evidence which had come under his observation seemed to leave no doubt that his charge of treachery against the dead monk had pretty solid foundation.

One of his listeners tried to explain it away upon a rather plausible theory.

"If Lipowski had sent for Rasputin—*commanded* him to report, for some particular examination—he would have been compelled to go——"

"A man who controlled the Czar sufficiently to make and unmake Russian premiers? Hardly! He'd have been more likely to suggest Lipowski's appearing before *him* and the Emperor! Again—had he been commanded to appear before the Head of the Police, it would have been at Lipowski's office in the Prefecture—not clandestinely at that mysterious house in the old quarter of the city! That rendezvous was intended to be a secret one! Now comes the question as to whether Rasputin was playing a lone hand in betraying your organization? His individual word carried a good deal of weight—but it seems to me that it wouldn't have been conclusive with such a man

as Lipowski unless some of the prominent nobles backed him in the betrayal of their former associates. One way of getting at the probabilities in that line would be to investigate, among yourselves, just how many were fully conversant with the details of this bridge-wrecking proposition. It is an engineering matter which I should have supposed out of that monk's line altogether. He probably knew the *fact* but not the *details*—and Lipowski is quite evidently in possession of all the technical data. When you find out which members of your organization were in position to give such information, I think it may be an obvious precaution to keep an eye on them for a while. Frankly—I've been amazed at the extent and power of your organization. Anything of its size is sure to be in danger of treachery where you least suspect it. That seems unavoidable."

This was even more disquieting to at least eight of the party in the big hall.

That the man whom they'd considered their strongest influence in the web of German intrigue at Petrograd should have proved a traitor who had been eliminated none too soon—possibly by some of their own associates—was startling enough. But the more they considered this Irish-American's further suggestions the more it seemed treachery might be stalking at their very elbows.

In the silence which followed McMurtagh's remarks, they noticed that one of their number was looking fixedly at the Honorable Aloysius in a peculiar manner. The Baroness Sophie Mourakoff had been for six years one of the reigning beauties of Petrograd and Moscow. Descended from an old Slav family, she was considered

thoroughly Russian in spite of several German intermarriages—which made her the more valuable to the chiefs of the *Green Circle* and more dangerous to the Russian Government. With the manner and appearance of an *ingénue*, she was equipped with a maturely subtle intellect which grasped the motive behind human actions in a rather uncanny way—it was the sort of prescient understanding one never looks for in a *débutante*. There was now, in the question she asked McMurtagh, a suggestion of dread possibilities which attracted the attention of everyone.

"At what time last evening, m'sieur, did you see Rasputin coming out of that mysterious old house?"

Trevor felt a creepy sensation along the flesh between his shoulders, but replied without the slightest hesitation:

"Possibly half after six. I was on my way to dine with friends at the *Donon*, on the *Moika*."

"You're quite sure you saw the monk himself, at that hour—in the old quarter of the city?"

"Positive, Baroness. I had a close view of his face in the light from an arc-lamp at the corner."

"Then would you mind telling us how he happened to be acting as the chauffeur of a landaulet in front of the French Embassy at eleven o'clock last night, when you came out from the ball with a lady and drove away in it?"

Again Earl Trevor was conscious of the creepy sensation along his spine. It was one thing for the Princess Xenia to defy the dreaded *Green Circle* and take measures to protect herself from assassination by members of her own Order; she knew the game—the risks—the difficul-

ties in making away with a woman of her position and vast wealth. But for a British peer, masquerading as an Irish-American for the purpose of defeating coups planned by the German intrigue in Petrograd, there was no possible immunity, once his real purpose was suspected. Trevor had been in hundreds of tight places within the previous ten years, but he realized, as he sat there surrounded by all the evidences of wealth and ultra-civilization in one of Russia's most famous palaces, that his life had never been in greater danger. Yet, as always in moments of greatest risk, his manner was never more genially self-possessed. His assumption that there could be no possible reason for suspecting him of any questionable proceeding was convincing; he seemed to be surrounded by an aura of genuineness and puzzled bewilderment as he answered her question.

"I fancy you can't possibly be right in that statement, Baroness—though I'll admit I didn't look at the chauffeur when I stepped into that landaulet. It was my friend's car. Now I think of it, she made some remark about her own man being called away that evening by the death of a relative, and sending another chauffeur to fill his place temporarily. But—even so, what possible object could that infernal monk have in such masquerading? Why—the doctors say he must have been *shot* before that hour! We were driven straight from the French Embassy to my friend's residence—the car was put in the garage on the premises.

"Those facts are too easily verified to be disputed. And even though I didn't get a square look at the chauffeur, I'm quite positive I should have recognized Rasputin

from his massive shoulders and his unusual hair. The man certainly was in this house long enough to have recognized *me* anywhere. What object could he have had in spying upon a person in my position, escorting to her home a lady well known in this city? If you'll pardon my putting it that way, the supposition is too absurd to consider for a moment! If the man had injured me in any way, I fancy I'd have had no hesitation in shooting him; but his relations with your organization were none of my affair. I never saw him outside of this house except upon the occasion I've mentioned."

"And who was the lady, m'sieur?"

McMurtagh's laughing retort brought a smile to every face in the group—for a moment.

"Er—possibly a relative of the gentleman with whom you were sleighing on the Neva, two nights ago, Baroness! Of course, I can't be positive upon that point unless you care to enlighten us. But—returning to more serious matters, if you permit me—I think, from an outsider's viewpoint, it might be well for your organization to do a little investigating from the inside before attempting to go ahead with any of your definite plans.

"Here is the position which Major Brady and I occupy. We came to you with credentials from Major Lupokovitch of the London Embassy—expecting to work out a plan whereby we might coöperate with you by starting something in Ireland simultaneously with a coup in Petrograd. We have funds enough to do a good deal; we could go further if you cared to assist us financially—that part of it is entirely up to you. We had blocked out a good working plan with Count Gazonoff just before his

sudden death—which appears to have left things rather up in the air. Just now, it seems to me that we can do nothing but mark time until your organization is more certain of carrying out its plans without betrayal and disaster. Once we start anything in Ireland, we must go through with it—or hang."

The young Baroness had been thoughtfully studying McMurtagh's face as he spoke. Unless her knowledge of human character was more faulty than she believed, the man was as genuine as he seemed. When he said he would have shot the monk had there been any reason for so doing, his manner carried the conviction that personal fear was an element which had been left out of his make-up. On a basis of ordinary probability, it did seem ridiculous that Rasputin should have voluntarily disguised himself as the unknown lady's chauffeur—the Baroness's statement that she had recognized the monk was merely a shot in the dark—she was by no means certain of it. As for McMurtagh's statements, they hadn't a flaw—his position among them was exactly what he claimed, and Baron Stellanovski had expressed himself as entirely satisfied with the credentials the two men had brought from London. Cold reason told her this Irish-American should prove a valuable co-worker in the German cause—a confrére to be cultivated and assisted in every possible manner. But—instinct favored the impression that she was yet very far from plumbing the man's depths or the secret motives in what he did or said. He was magnetic—curiously so. She was vaguely aware that the Princess Xenia also was finding the man a mystery worth studying. An alliance, of course, was impos-

sible—he wasn't even of aristocratic birth. But—a love affair—under the rose? Was there a limit at which the Tartar blood of the Tarazines would balk, once its latent fire became thoroughly aroused? Was there, for that matter, such a limit among the Mourakoffs? Presently several of the men drifted away to the billiard room and the rest to other parts of the house. The Grand Duke led McMurtagh aside before going out to his car.

"*M'sieur Américain*—you are evidently an excellent judge of character and you've been a guest here long enough to have formed some opinion as to what the Princess might do under certain conditions. Have you any idea what turned her against our organization?"

"Probably a combination of several things. She's proud of her blood—older than the Romanoffs—and her descent from Ghenghis Khan. She's the noble of Russia to her finger-tips, with all the sense of obligation to Order and Country which that implies. When Rasputin danced that *Khylsty* thing here, the other night—being the moujik he was—she was outraged in all her racial sensibilities. Then—the German atrocities—the inexcusable murders of women and children on land and sea—are things at which even a Russian princess balks—things which should never have occurred. She is beginning to think that if such methods are necessary to preserve autocratic government, there is neither honor nor object in being an aristocrat. I think she has the impression that Germany will never make any concession to Russia which hasn't 'a string to it,' as we say in the States. She is beginning to doubt that the national interests of the two countries can ever be compatible. I don't think so my-

self—but that, of course, is none of my affair. I'm out for Ireland—any combination that will defeat England! The *Green Circle* is playing my game, and I'm not concerned with its application to Russia—we have troubles of our own." (McMurtagh offered the Grand Duke a cigar, and lighted a fresh one himself. He gave the impression of discussing an abstract matter which didn't concern him.)

"H-m-m; how dangerous would you consider her? What course is she likely to take?"

"Your Highness is asking a question which no man has ever been wise enough to answer, concerning an intelligent woman. Personally—I would about as soon antagonize her as play with so much dynamite. She *may* be bluffing about that list in the hands of her executors—but I doubt it! I fancy we're all safe enough from any action of hers as long as none of us is directly implicated in something which seriously menaces Russia's future. Let her learn that some of the *Green Circle* have treacherously betrayed the country into an overwhelming disaster, and she's quite capable of going before the Duma with everything she knows—but if you do nothing worse than scheme for delay and half-hearted campaigning, I don't think we need fear anything from her. She's one of the most interesting enigmas I ever met—keeps me guessing all the time!"

Later the Honorable Aloysius was passing through the long Tudor gallery on the way to his own second-floor suite—rather close to the oak wainscoting of the solid wall that formed the side opposite the windows—when every light in the sconces was suddenly extinguished. The moon had not yet risen, so that the darkness was impen-

etrable. As he stood wondering if something could have happened to the palace dynamo in the cellar, there was a slight click in the wainscoting—a faint draft of air—and a small but firm hand grasped his arm. He caught a barely audible whisper, close to his ear:

"Step this way—very quietly. Now lift your foot about eight inches—don't stumble over this baseboard."

As he was being led along a narrow passage in pitchy darkness, there was a faint click behind them. The panel closed in the wainscoting, presenting an appearance of solidity that would have deceived any one examining it from the gallery side—particularly as it was backed with four inches of oak and would have given back no hollow sound if rapped upon.

The lights in the gallery sconces flashed up again just as the young Baroness opened a door at the farther end. Having noticed McMurtagh going in that direction a moment before, she glanced along the gallery expecting to see him—but decided that he must have passed through rather briskly to his own suite, which happened to be in the same wing as her own, though his windows were upon the opposite side, where she had no glimpse of them.

Meanwhile the Honorable Aloysius had been led around several turns in the narrow passage—evidently constructed within one of the thicker walls—until a fresher and faintly perfumed atmosphere told him they had stepped into a rather spacious room. As he stood in the middle of it, listening intently for the footsteps of his mysterious guide, three incandescents flashed up in a table-lamp by his side—and he saw that he was in a private study of the Princess Xenia's. Through an open door, one

dimly made out a bath with a dressing room beyond it. Around the walls were solidly filled bookshelves; between the windows stood a Flemish highboy used as a writing-desk, and by the table at his side was a broad divan covered with a magnificent tiger skin. The Princess had seated herself upon this—motioning to a near-by chair—but he coolly sat down by her side and took one of her hands in his own. The color flamed into her face as she made a slight attempt to withdraw it.

"*Mon ami*—you seem to forget that one of my rank is inviolable—not to be touched!"

Trevor smiled at this.

"And you evidently haven't learned that, to a man of any democratic country, a princess is merely such a woman as his sister or his wife—her only sacredness being the fact that she *is* a woman. Respect for empty rank seems too ridiculous for consideration. Suppose we forget it—and go into your object in bringing me here. You know better than I whether it's safe to mention political affairs in this room."

"The walls are sound-proof—every approach to it is guarded by electric appliances. I was particular about the construction of this place, and my architect was a Frenchman who died two years ago—he brought his own force of workmen."

She was looking at him curiously, with scarcely concealed wonder and admiration. "Do you know, *mon ami*, just where Rasputin really was at half after six last evening?"

"Oh, I'm not quite stupid enough to risk my life upon the sort of lie which a dozen people may expose at any mo-

ment! At six, that monk was in the house I described to the Grand Duke and the rest of them—disguising himself in the uniform of a Russian admiral. Fully half of that great beard he buttoned inside the collar of his uniform coat; that big mane of his was turned up and covered with a wig of shorter hair. I'd suspected he might threaten you for reasons of his own, and followed him for two hours—saw him drive up to your *porte-cochère* in a stylish limousine and send in his admiral's card, asking for an immediate interview. Your servants, presumably, didn't recognize the fellow at all. You were already in the secret of our plan to exile him that night—so had little fear of his threats. But I went back and met him near that house when he came out dressed as the Countess's chauffeur. He must have had a rather complete wardrobe of disguises there—all of which are probably in General Lipowski's possession by this time. If any of the *Green Circle* were in the habit of meeting him at that old house, they're pretty sure to avoid it after what I said this evening. It was my description of the place which made the statements appear only the literal truth—some of them must have known the building."

"*M'sieur*, if you were really conscious of your deadly personal danger in the hall, this evening, you are a brave man! Now, who—and what—are you?"

"I don't think I quite understand?"

"Oh—yes—you—do, *mon ami!* You understand perfectly! I thought at the time that the assistance you offered us in getting rid of that moujik was rather surprising—considering your affiliation with the *Green Circle* and your coming to Petrograd for the express purpose

of coöperating with it. It was natural enough for any gentleman to be disgusted with Rasputin, to put him in his proper place; but you went a great deal further than that. To-night you've gone all the way, and your life wouldn't be worth a copper kopeck if the *Green Circle* knew what I know about you! Stop a bit! I remember that you came to me with a card from the Earl of Dyvnaint, the famous Lord Trevor! Is it by any chance possible that you are a member of the English secret service—in *Downing Street?* That would account for everything!"

"Do I appear to be the political *mouchard*, Your Highness?"

"*Au contraire*, you have the manner of the nobility. And one knows the diplomatic service is an honorable profession which includes men of title in every country."

"But I am an American—nobility isn't one of our national institutions."

"Possibly you were born in America—but you're not an American of the present day! That is certain!"

"What do you mean by that? What's your idea of a Twentieth Century American?"

"A hybrid—a mixture of European dregs with a bourgeois and tradesman class which has forgotten the principles of liberty—equality, justice, and humanity—upon which the United States was originally founded! Insulting—am I not? And yet—I mean no insult! The whole world is dumbfounded at the spectacle of a national patience so far beyond anything human that it submits to a hundred outrages that would have meant war in any other nation! America permits her women and children to be

murdered upon land and sea—her ships to lie rotting in their own harbors because they dare not sail—her property to be dynamited—her Government used as a cats-paw by a military despotism which will assuredly enslave her if it subdues Europe. A country which permits Mexican bandits to ravish its women—invade its cities—spit upon it! Apparently, the old breed of Americans who won their country from England in the Revolution and preserved its unity in the Civil War is dead—and has been succeeded by something vastly different! What else are we, in Europe, to believe from the facts?"

"There are a few of the old breed still living in America, Your Highness—*and they'll wipe the stains from our good old Flag in a way that will mean annihilation to everything that Germany stands for, to-day!* Give us just a little more time! Meanwhile let us return to your immediate purpose with me. The evidence in your possession appears to indicate that I may be working against the *Green Circle* instead of with it. Well, it's a simple matter to eliminate my activities; the merest hint from you will be sufficient. I may be dead within the hour—always, provided you are right in your surmise concerning me!"

"*M'sieur*, by what you said this evening you did more to disorganize the immediate work of the *Green Circle* than all the efforts of Serge Lipowski's police! You planted suspicion in the very heart of the organization; there's not a member in Petrograd at this moment who is above the suspicions of his fellow members; it is certain that the Grand Duke has been spreading your insinuations in the clubs since he left here! It was the sort of weapon Machiavelli used with deadly effect. Now comes the

question as to whether we can further block the efforts of the *Green Circle*—without losing our lives too soon."

"Then Your Highness is really determined to work against that crowd? As a loyal Russian, I really don't see how you can do anything else; but without their co-operation our Irish uprising is quite impossible, you know! Major Brady and I need them in our business!"

"Enough, my friend! You've no more interest in Ireland than I. You need fear no betrayal from me—even if you refuse my assistance. It seems, however, that it might prove valuable, in various ways."

"For example: Could you invite General Ossipovitch to be your guest for the week-end—arriving to-morrow evening in time for dinner? I mean—make *sure* of his being here—and have the Grand Duke in the house at the same time? I'm well aware of your detestation for the man."

"Why—that should be managed, if I go about it indirectly. Though I don't—quite—see——"

"I was told in London that the active chiefs of the *Green Circle* were Count Boris Gazonoff who died the other day, just after we'd had a secret conference with him—General Ivan Ossipovitch, who has taken over the army transportation since Gazonoff's death—and Baron Stellanovski, who has so many deputies of the Duma in his power, one way and another, that he almost controls it. When the Count died, it upset their plans a good deal. You say I've been fortunate enough to do a little more in that direction. If the suspicions of other *Circle* members can be definitely focussed upon General Ossipovitch, you can imagine what may happen to him and how much his elimination will in-

crease the muddle. That would leave only Stellanovski, of the leaders; probably something may occur to us in regard to him as we go along. But—if you permit me to warn Your Highness—you will be playing with death at every step, and you have far more to lose than I. Better consider before you decide."

There was a winning kindness about the man which influenced her strongly, and an impression of latent force. Who or what he really was she couldn't decide, but that he was far more of a personage than he chose to appear seemed unquestionable. In her level, straightforward glance there was an expression which told him that he might have taken her in his arms and kissed her without rebuke—but glancing over her shoulder at that moment, it seemed to him that one of the panels in the dark oak wainscoting had become warped by the heat of the room until it had sprung back half an inch from its surrounding moldings.

A quick comparison of the adjoining panels showed no such effect in any of them; he saw that it must be the secret door by which she had brought him into the room. But he distinctly remembered the click of a spring-lock behind them when she was turning on the lights. If, by sheer mischance, someone had discovered the secret of the panel in the gallery—had crept along that passage to overhear what they were saying? With a finger upon his lips, he stealthily circled the wall until, without making a sound, he stood beside the panel. Suddenly placing his hand flat upon it, he gave a powerful shove inward. There was a sound of someone falling backward upon the floor of the passage. Before the man could struggle up, Trevor was upon him—wrenching a knife from one hand and dragging

a revolver from his pocket. Then—with a strength which his appearance failed to indicate—he thrust the spy into the room, handed the revolver to the Princess, that she might cover him, and searched the passage for possible companions.

When the Baroness Mourakoff went through the long gallery on the way to her rooms, she met Count Stefen Grünwald standing behind the portière at the farther end, and asked him if he had just seen McMurtagh—which he apparently had not. Count Stefan was also of the *Green Circle*—but, unlike many of his Russian associates, was influenced by a personal animus which made him push its work in deadly earnest. His father, a Berliner, had been a resident of Petrograd for many years, having married a Russian lady of his own rank and possessed of large estates which necessitated their residence in Russia to look after them. But he had been educated at Prussian universities and had always fraternized with his German relatives more than with those of his mother's family.

He had opened the door at the end of the gallery just as the lights went out, and had an indistinct impression of seeing a man's figure near the wainscoting a second before. When the current was turned on again, he saw the Baroness coming along the gallery—but the man was nowhere in sight. He certainly had not passed him—and her inquiry revealed his identity. Grünwald had been one of these who were most suspicious of the Honorable Aloysius during the talk in the big hall; and in spite of that gentleman's plausibility, had not been entirely satisfied. Walking slowly along by the wainscoting, he stopped at the spot where he had seen McMurtagh standing.

Grünwald was slow-witted—but painstaking and relentless, once he started upon the track of anything; so he began by trying to imagine where he would have concealed the spring if he had been a carpenter constructing a secret door. His first guess was somewhere under the molding of the baseboard—but his fingers ran along it for several feet without finding anything. He tried the upper molding, with the same result. Then he fell to studying the carved foliage upon the panels themselves. It was close to one in the morning—nobody happened to come through the gallery. Suddenly one of the panels swung inward before him, without his knowing just what he had touched to release the spring. With a quick glance to be sure he was unobserved, he stepped through—gently closing the panel behind him.

When Trevor had satisfied himself that the fellow had no accomplice hidden in the passage, he returned to Xenia's study, where she was lounging on the divan—the revolver upon her knee, covering the Count, who sat composedly in a near-by chair. The supposed Irish-American quietly dropped into his former place on the divan—by the Princess. But for the blue-black revolver, one might have supposed them in the midst of a friendly chat—but there was a tenseness in the atmosphere which made the Count vaguely uneasy. Of course, it was ridiculous to suppose for a moment they would do him bodily harm—when he explained how mere curiosity had led him to investigate the secret panel and see where the passage led to! The *Green Circle* was too dangerous an organization to antagonize—his standing in it was too well known to the other members. As the seconds ticked away with the silence

still unbroken, a chill gradually took possession of him. It was impossible that anything serious could happen, but—suddenly, he broke out in a voluble explanation of just how he happened to explore the passage.

"Of course, Your Highness will understand I am most discreet—always! One has one's own little affairs under the rose—I thought that passage must have been constructed when this old palace was built—before Your Highness purchased it. Was not even aware that you knew of it—idle curiosity—romantic sort of contrivance, you know—that sort of thing! Most indiscreet of me—oh, I grant you that! Offer a thousand apologies! Will consider that I dreamed all this—and forget it."

Trevor's low voice cut into his halting explanations like a knife through paper:

"Count, you and I are on opposite sides—enemies to the death. We are neither of us in the trenches—because what we do affects thousands where the man on the firing-line accounts for but a score or two. And for that reason we neither give nor expect quarter. If we let you go, it means death to the Princess, death to me, calamity for Russia, and reverses for the *Entente*—no matter what promises you may give us. You wish us to believe that you heard nothing of what we said in this room—hmph! A *man* would take his medicine without trying to lie out of it, the facts being so clearly against him! Well, we must get this over with! It's after one in the morning. I have in my pocket two cigars of excellent flavor. One of them is practically certain death to the man who smokes it—particularly if his heart is a bit weak. They are identical in appearance. I will lay them on the table here, and

we'll turn our backs while Her Highness shifts their relative positions a few times. Then we'll each light one and smoke it. If I die, I don't think you've nerve enough to harm the Princess—with that list of names in the hands of her executors. In fact, it's a hundred to one against the *Circle's* permitting you to do so. Now—Your Highness—if you will oblige?"

Every particle of color had left her face, but her hand was fairly steady as she altered the position of the cigars while their backs were turned. As the Count took one, he was ghastly—trembling so violently that he could scarcely cut the tip from the cigar he had chosen. Trevor held the match for him to light it—and Xenia noticed that there was not the slightest vibration in the flame. He was even smiling as he struck another for his own cigar.

"I suppose one gets a more immediately fatal effect of the drug in this tobacco if it is smoked quite rapidly. But a man dies but once—I prefer to analyze my sensations. So I shall try to prolong them until I feel myself going."

A minute passed in absolute silence—two—five! Whether from sheer terror at the prospect of relentlessly approaching death, or from the nerve-paralysis of unusually strong tobacco, Count Stefan's breathing had grown more laborious; he was gasping as he struggled to smoke the cigar down and have it over with. It was gruesome for any onlooker—much more, a woman—but the Princess sat there as if carved in marble, her eyes never leaving Trevor's face. The other's suffering she didn't even notice.

Finally, with a little choking exclamation, Grünwald dropped his cigar and began tearing at his collar. Before

he could rip it loose, he staggered to his feet and tried to reach the window—pitching headlong on the floor before he had covered half the distance. There were a few convulsive shivers; then he lay there motionless. In a moment or two Earl Trevor knelt beside him and unbuttoned his waistcoat; there was no beating of the heart. Taking a hand-mirror from the Flemish highboy, he held it over the man's lips for two or three minutes—there was no sign of moisture. He got upon his feet, shoved both hands deep into his trousers pockets, and went back to stand reflectively before the Princess.

"I'm wondering what would have happened if it had been I." (Her lips trembled for the first time—the beautiful eyes filled.)

"Thank God it was not! I should have killed him—and then myself, I think! This is the first time I ever saw a man look death in the face—and smile! I love you for that, *mon ami !*"

Placing her hands gently upon his shoulders, she raised her lips to his.

With his arm about her, Trevor looked down reflectively at the dead man.

"Xenia, that was the strangest experiment in psychology I ever saw! I *have* in my possession a few cigars which are deadly. But these two were only pure Havana maduros, worth two roubles each—about the strongest made. You notice I smoked but little more than an inch of mine; yet I can feel it in every nerve. Now, three nights ago, my attention was attracted to the brilliant red spot in the centre of the Count's cheeks. I saw he was a heavy eater of rich food, and that he drank a good deal

of wine with it. I noticed the amount and appearance of his flesh—also the condition of his nerves. Put the man in the trenches, and he'd possibly fight like a cornered rat—in a frenzy of fear. With death at his elbow in a less violent form, he proved the yellow coward he really was. The man simply couldn't be allowed to live. With what he overheard in that passage, he was a menace to the whole *Entente*. But it goes against the grain to kill even a coward in cold blood—so I figured his weak heart would settle him just as effectively from sheer fright."

"You—you would have smoked that cigar of his—clear through—if he had happened to choose yours?"

"Of course! I was bound in honor to smoke as long as he did, even though it would have made my nerves jumpy for two or three days. And if there was anything the matter with my heart, it might have carried me off, I dare say. Hmph! Wonder what we'd best do with him? Fancy the safest plan is to carry the body through that passage and lay it down in the long gallery, as if he had fallen there from a sudden attack of heart disease. H-m-m—if one could be sure that some of the *Green Circle* would find the body before your servants, I'd put a paper in one of his pockets that would arouse still more suspicion throughout the organization!"

As it happened, the body *was* found by a crony of the Grand Duke's coming up to bed from the billiard-room at half-past two in the morning. Very much worried over the possibility of being implicated in a murder, he aroused the other members of the *Circle* and fetched them into the gallery before touching the body. Finding no wound or evidence of violent death, they carried it along to the

Count's own room, where they searched his pockets after sending his valet to 'phone for a physician. A letter which they found among his other papers, with the ink less than a day old, caused the assassination of two men prominent in the Council of the Empire a week later. As for Grünwald's sudden taking-off, the doctors pronounced it unquestionably a case of heart disease. After the Baroness mentioned his acting queerly when she met him in the gallery on the previous night, there was never a suspicion connecting any one with the case.

That afternoon Earl Trevor (in whom nobody would have recognized the Honorable Aloysius) motored from the British Embassy, where he was staying, to the house of the Countess Wirdovski in time for afternoon tea. Before leaving, a conference was managed with General Serge Lipowski, who also had dropped in to pay his respects. As it was advisable that Lipowski's call upon the Countess should be a brief one, the Earl got down to business without loss of time.

"General, is the Grand Duke Feodor familiar with your handwriting? Sufficiently to identify it if only initialled by way of signature?"

"Hmph! He *should* recognize it—he's had occasional I-O-U'S for my losses at the club! If that is a requisite in some plan your *Downing Street* men are trying to put through, you're in luck, because I'm obliged to be exceedingly careful that my handwriting is *not* too well known in Petrograd! What's up? My secret police report that the reactionaries in both the Council and the Duma appear to be quarreling among themselves—rather bitterly. Do you know anything about it?"

"Well, it won't surprise me if you are busy over the killing of some rather prominent men before long. Our agents are doing what they can—and seem to be having more luck than we dared hope when we came from England. However, they may be wiped out in the very act of scoring an important coup."

"Let us hope not! Russia owes you gentlemen a pretty heavy debt already—which goes to show that outsiders sometimes accomplish what we find impossible from our intimate relations with the people here. Now, what about this writing of mine?"

His Lordship handed Lipowski a memorandum which the General read in a puzzled way:

*"Concerning the Siberian munition trains, you will proceed with the arrangements originally contemplated. Your agents will shunt the trains at the junctions agreed upon and proceed as if nothing had been changed. If this is done, my men can make no mistake when they act. We will see that the shunted trains contain nothing but scrap-iron or sand in barrels, and that the needed supplies get to the front over other lines. S. L."*

"I infer that you want me to write this upon a half-sheet of note-paper—as if it had been torn from the first part of a letter; but I don't quite see what good it is going to do your men——"

"Suppose that scrap is dropped from the pocket of someone very prominent in the Army Transportation Department (I'll carefully heat it to age the ink) and is picked up by the Grand Duke?"

"You mean—— Great heaven! Is Feodor Feodorovitch conspiring against his own country?"

"Just for a basis of argument, suppose he is—and picks up that scrap—eh?"

"My friend, I thought we'd borrowed a few hints in obliquity from the Orientals, but I'm really not in your class! (Here—let me sit down and write this out!) Saints preserve us! Where's the sense in arresting and executing people when you can make them kill each other? I'll give you fifty thousand roubles if you'll tell me how to be sure enough of my facts to attempt this sort of thing with any certainty of success!"

That evening General Ivan Ossipovitch, Acting Chief of the Army Transportation Department, arrived with his valet at the Tarazine Palace in time for dinner. With the Princess Xenia, Baroness Mourakoff, and the Honorable Aloysius, he afterward motored in to see the Russian Ballet at the *Théâtre Marie*—the Grand Duke Feodor joining them before the end of the performance and returning with the party to the palace on the Kamennoi Ostrow. There was the usual midnight supper, with an adjournment to the great hall of the palace for cigarettes and tea. General Ossipovitch had been carrying on a lively conversation with the Baroness Sophie in the dining room—and continued it in the big hall. Just as the Honorable Aloysius passed behind their divan to pour another cup of tea from the samovar, Xenia called to the General—who struggled to his feet and waddled over to her. On the divan where he had been sitting lay a crumpled scrap of paper. Picking it up, the Baroness was evidently thinking of returning it to Ossipovitch, when McMurtagh sat down by her with the cup of steaming tea.

"Love letters? Baroness! Baroness! It's myself

that's sad, the night! Will you be telling me the name of the lucky man till I call him out?"

Somehow it seemed to her that there was a meaning look in the Irish-American's face—a subtle warning against what she was about to do. As she refused the tea, he laughingly went over to join the Grand Duke—making some remark in a low tone before passing on. In a moment Feodor sauntered over and sat down by the Baroness, who, in spite of her repugnance to that sort of thing, had stolen a look at the scrap of paper. Presently she handed it to him—behind her fan—explaining that it must have dropped out of Ossipovitch's pocket.

Three nights later General Ossipovitch was fatally shot by two unknown men who had somehow disposed of the chauffeur while his car was waiting outside the house of a lady upon whom he was calling.

Next day General Lipowski learned through his secret channels that the Honorable Aloysius McMurtagh—whom he knew only as a brilliant secret service agent from *Downing Street*—had become exceedingly popular with the reactionaries and the pro-German party—a man whose growing influence was most surprising in a mere, transient visitor. And Lipowski chuckled.

## CHAPTER XI

### CAPT. CREIGHTON'S ACCOUNT OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

IN THE safety vaults of *Downing Street* there are files of documents relating to many of the diplomatic coups in which British secret agents have been engaged—with a few exceptions, where the existence of a record would constantly menace the lives of men too valuable to endanger. Very few exploits of England's *Diplomatic Free Lance* are recorded in these files, because a comparison of dates and places might suggest clues to the man's identity in the mind of some under secretary or clerk who happened upon them. And, some day, a casual remark in the Foreign Office might set other men thinking. Conclusions would be drawn; there would be more or less whispered conjecture in the Department; eventually the identity of the celebrity would be disclosed.

The events leading up to the Russian Revolution, however, were so intricate—an account of them so necessary to a proper understanding of subsequent conditions in Petrograd—that one of the confidential stenographers took down the informal narrative of the officer commanding the British Secret Service men in that city just as it was given to the Foreign Secretary—the account covering not only his personal experiences but such additional information as he had obtained from Earl Trevor and Baron Lammerford—who were then staying at the British Em-

bassy in Petrograd—and three agents, acting under their orders. The typewritten sheets bear the endorsement: "Notes from the statements of Capt. Eversley Creighton —th Hussars ("F. O. 143") during a private interview with the Rt. Hon. the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, May 3, 1917"—and no attempt has been made to arrange them in official form, the narrative commencing as follows:

"Although we had been securing a mass of information which neither Berlin nor the Russian Government dreamed of our having, concerning the German intrigue in Petrograd, it was understood at the British Embassy that the situation was calling, more and more insistently, for a wider diplomatic experience than mine or any of the men under me—a super-intelligence capable of understanding the probable ramifications of a plot merely from the character or antecedents of some individual connected with it. This became evident in October and November. Consequently, we were jolly well bucked up when His Lordship of Dyvnaint—the famous Admiral, Earl Trevor —arrived in Petrograd on *E-69* with Baron Lammerford, who was Dean of the King's Messengers in the old days before I joined the Service.

"They took up quarters at the Embassy for obvious reasons—it was the one place in Petrograd where we might confer with them privately without having every word reported by General Serge Lipowski's Russian Police. (The Duma people burned the Prefecture before I left, and fancied they destroyed all of the documental secret information collected there for years—but the old fox had removed every paper of real value before they got to him.)

"At the time of His Lordship's arrival, we were told that he had brought with him in the submarine three of the most brilliant men in the service—who were remaining aboard *E-69*, out in the Gulf of Finland, until such time as they could be introduced to General Lipowski in some agreed-upon disguises, and receive the coöperation of his secret police. During the next fortnight we met all three of them in their assumed characters and they were so jolly good at that sort of thing—such beautiful linguists—that I fancy I shouldn't recognize any of them in London if they were introduced to me as they really are.

"The chap with whom I came most frequently in contact, and with whom I esteem it an honor to have worked, appeared in Petrograd as Major Michael Brady—a Dublin *Sinn Feiner* who knew the city very well and had come there to secure coöperation from the pro-German element in a coup that would be simultaneous with another uprising in Ireland. His companion was supposed to be an Irish-American capitalist, the Hon. Aloysius McMurtagh. The third man was made up as an oriental valet of McMurtagh's so jolly well that it would have been impossible to suspect him of being English. I fancied that he *might* be Sir Abdool Mohammed Khan, G. C. S. I., the Afghan prince who also accompanied Earl Trevor—but the valet was at least two inches shorter, and Sir Abdool was present at several public receptions when both McMurtagh and his man were known to be at the Tarazine Palace.

"The German secret organizations in Petrograd are known among the reactionaries as the *Green Circle* and *Camarilla*. Any open discussion of their work or objects is quite likely to be fatal—has been fatal in many cases.

We had obtained evidence which seemingly connected General Ivan Ossipovitch with it, but were by no means positive. In some deuced clever manner Brady and McMurtagh had obtained credentials associating them with the organization before coming to Petrograd—so they had the advantage of us from the start. Before they had been in the city a week they spotted Count Boris Gazonoff, General Ossipovitch, Baron Alexis Stellanovski, and the monk Rasputin as the real leaders of the *Green Circle.* Count Gazonoff died of heart disease just after an interview with them yet I am positive none of the Russians has seen anything suspicious in his death. Rasputin was shot by a woman in the grounds of Prince Kussupoff's palace, as all the world knows. General Ossipovitch was shot by two members of the *Green Circle* one night in his own limousine—just after he had taken over the Army Transportation Department. This left only Stellanovski, of the original four leaders.

"During this time, McMurtagh had been a guest of the Princess Xenia in her palace on the Kamennoi Ostrow, and, for the last two weeks of it, Major Brady had been a house-guest of the Baron's. From what we picked up outside, they must have done something which not only proved their loyalty to the *Green Circle* but made them exceedingly popular with every German sympathizer in the city. Of course, their lives would not have been worth a brass farthing had suspicion been aroused connecting them with those three deaths—which came most opportunely for the *Entente,* I can assure you. In fact, the revolution would have been impossible while those four men lived.

"The whole winter had been a succession of alternating premiers and foreign secretaries. First a Liberal Progressive ministry and Russian success on the eastern front —then resignations, a pro-German ministry, a mess of Rasputin court intrigue—Russian and Roumanian reverses from lack of munitions and support. A dozen times the situation looked hopeless to us in spite of anything which could be done. Miliukoff, the strongest leader in the Duma, we had to sneak away from his house in a limousine one night and get him aboard our submarine—to save his life. Agents of the *Green Circle* were combing the city for him with positive orders that he must be killed before morning.

"McMurtagh had me invited, two or three evenings, to the Tarazine Palace—where I heard German plans so openly discussed that a separate peace with Berlin seemed to me only a matter of weeks, though the Princess Xenia showed a contempt for the *Green Circle* which made me fear they'd murder her. But it was not until Baron Stellanovski, at Brady's suggestion, had me spend a few nights at his big house on the Aptekarsky that I got into the real game and had a chance to study the inner workings of the most amazing intrigue which has ever throttled the Government of a great nation.

"I had known the Baron as head of a prominent banking-house on the Nevski, with branches in most of the world's capitals, and by jolly good luck our acquaintance had begun in a way that made him suppose me a *Wilhelmstrasse* spy. Last fall a Captain Gregorio Czechzin, of the Serbian Signal Corps, came to Petrograd with funds to put up a high-powered radio station in the suburbs for

communication across the Carpathians and Balkans. For a week, he tried to get a little coöperation from the Minister of War—but something blocked him at every step. Then I found him in front of his lodgings, one night, just after he had been shot. I carried him up to his room. He had guessed that I was a secret agent for one of the *Entente* powers—was so positive of it that he told me where to dig out his papers, from under a loose board, and whispered the key of the Serbian wireless code just before he died.

"Czechzin was about my own height, build, and complexion. The idea occurred to me that I might be able to impersonate him if I could forge his signature well enough to pass at Baron Stellanovski's bank—upon which his Serbian drafts had been made out. I found two of our men—returned to his room—lowered the body out of a rear window, and managed to get it away in a touring-car without being caught. Then I made myself up in the Captain's uniform and went to call upon Stuermer, afterward premier—knowing him to be strongly pro-German. The color went out of his face when he looked at my card; you see, the *Green Circle* had told him I was dead and out of the way.

"I confessed to him that Czechzin really *was* dead, and that I was from Berlin—suggesting that the proposed wireless station, with me impersonating the Serbian in charge of it, might be an excellent thing for *Wilhelmstrasse* in the way of intercepting information and furthering the work of his organization. He saw the point at once—said my drafts would be honored at Stellanovski's bank even if the indorsements did look a bit queer, and was immensely pleased with my proposition. With

such backing the radio station was ready to operate in a very short time. I opened up communication with Saloniki and Bucharest, giving the messages only to officers or statesmen whom we knew were loyal to Russia. For Stuermer and his crowd I cooked up messages which seemed to them of great importance, but concerning which the *Entente* was fully posted before they got them. So when Major Brady suggested the Baron's having me as a house-guest in order to meet and confer with some of the *Green Circle* people, Stellanovski thought himself quite well aware of my real identity and interests as a *Wilhelmstrasse* man—was under supposed obligations to me, in fact. And his invitation was a cordial one. They needed me in their business.

"The Baron's house was managed by a niece whose mother had married a Berliner. Returning to Petrograd after the death of her parents, to manage property left by her mother, she had naturally taken up residence with her bachelor uncle. There was a large retinue of servants besides two private secretaries and three *Green Circle* people employed in clerical work; but seldom more than two or three house-guests at any one time. Fräulein Olga had too much of the Prussian domineering in her make-up to be popular with either men or women, so that people invited to stay in the house were almost invariably friends of Stellanovski rather than his niece. One infers that she was an excellent housekeeper, and I happen to know something of her capacity for intrigue. It was altogether cold-blooded, for—though rather a handsome woman—she hadn't the least personal charm. But she was a shrewd reader of character, an exceptional linguist,

and had a gift for scientific deduction which made her a holy terror when a man of Stellanovski's brains used it as he did. For example:

"The evening of my arrival one of the deputies from a central Asiatic province was dining there, accompanied by his wife—a simple-minded woman who knew too much of her husband's everyday life, and thought she was furthering his interests by talking about it when in the company of those she considered influential. After they left, Olga came to her uncle in his private study, where the Major and I were smoking with him, and dryly gave us the gist of what she had wormed out of them without asking a single direct question:

"'Karatoff has struck indications of oil on some of his land, but has no money to bore for it or handle the quantity he thinks there is eight hundred feet down. He won't form a development company, because it would cut his profits in half. Is looking for somebody who'll lend him a hundred thousand roubles, with a mortgage as security, but admits that the only portion of his land he's willing to pledge isn't worth that. He has sunk a short well, using his own moujik labor, and has struck unmistakable indications that oil exists there—in unknown quantity. If you care to loan him the money through a dummy, he's too simple-minded to question the form in which it comes to him or the real identity of the lender. He'd jump at the chance to borrow on his personal notes without security—which gives you opportunity to have someone approach him with marked Bank of Russia bills. Then, when he seems likely to vote for some objectionable measure in the Duma, he can be given to understand that

he has received a bribe of a hundred thousand roubles—that the fact will be made public unless he promptly votes against the measure.'

"'Excellent, Olga—capital! Have the money advanced to him to-morrow in just that way—no hint as to our knowing anything of the matter at all. Karatoff is becoming a recognized leader in the Progressive party; I've been thinking for several weeks I should get some hold upon him. Apropos—I'm rather expecting Konstantine Pluvinskow to come here sometime before midnight. I think enough hints have reached him to cause some uneasiness in his mind by this time. When he comes, have him shown directly in here. If I happen to be out, tell him to stay until I return.'

"From what Major Brady told me, supplementing my own knowledge of affairs in Petrograd, I fancy that Alexis Stellanovski, as he sat there with us in his study, that night, had more underhand power over a greater number of people than any other man in the Russian empire. Rasputin, the intriguing monk, during the last year he lived, had more control over the Imperial family and the Court, through his hold upon the Czarina, but Stellanovski's influence was more far-reaching, because it corrupted men of all social grades in the Council of the Empire, in the Duma, and in the *zemstvos* of every Russian Government and Province.

"Although physically in poor health, he had many times the brains and scheming ability of either Gazonoff, Ossipovitch, or Rasputin—all of whom had been killed within the preceding three weeks.

"In appearance, the man closely resembled his former confidant, the late Baron Mennikoff, who was at the bottom of so many plots in London and Paris during the years immediately preceding the war, and who was defeated so frequently by our mysterious Free Lance. Both of them suggested gross, hairy spiders with overdeveloped paunch and thin legs, wiry black hair cut *en brosse*, close-clipped beard, wearing thick-lensed spectacles like those of a German professor. But where Mennikoff had a constitution that neither rich foods nor any sort of dissipation appeared to undermine, Stellanovski was dyspeptic and asthmatic. As we sat there in his sound-proof study, guarded from intrusion or spying by servants whose lives were at the mercy of the *Green Circle*, he smoked cubebs between each cigar to alleviate the asthmatic paroxysms and labored so heavily for breath that, half a dozen times, I feared he would strangle to death before we left the room. Yet for months he had been able to defeat or pass any measure he chose in either Council or Duma. The way he handled Pluvinskow illustrates some of his methods.

"Pluvinskow was a member of the Council, a man whom Premier Trepoff was using at that moment to introduce and put through his most important supporting measures for the Army campaigns. The Baron had caused a number of hints to reach him, giving the Councillor a vague uneasiness which he couldn't get rid of. He knew of no good reason why it should be necessary for him to call upon the banker; yet the hints became more and more insistent that his life and reputation might be jeopardized if he didn't. So he finally turned up about eleven o'clock and was shown directly into the study, where we still

happened to be discussing various pro-German plans. Brady and I got on our feet to leave the room, but Stellanovski motioned for us to sit down again—introducing us as men who knew all about the caller and might not be quite what we seemed.

"After opening a fresh box of cigars and motioning toward wine on the table, he chatted with the man for a while on the political situation, then he took from a drawer in his desk what appeared to be a rather lengthy note, in a square envelope—and asked Pluvinskow to glance over it. Brady and I watched him without appearing to do so. His expression after a first reading was one of puzzled amazement; then the color went out of his face as he sputteringly protested:

"'But—my dear Baron, I don't understand! This letter gives the impression of having been written by me—in fact, the writing and the signature are very clever forgeries! But——'

"Stellanovski wheezed for a moment or two until the cubebs relieved him. 'Ah! That is what I wished to ascertain, M'sieur Pluvinskow. It didn't seem possible to me that you could have written so compromising a letter—discussed so dangerous a matter in writing. But I naturally wished to be sure. This—er—note was found among the papers of a person recently caused to be arrested on a serious charge by my bank, and I put it in my pocket before any one had an opportunity to study or identify the signature. Of course, if you pronounce it a forgery that simplifies my course: I shall send it to General Lipowski and have his secret police run down the criminal if possible. There happens to be no money trans-

action involved, but we bankers, in self-defense, must prosecute anything in the nature of clever forgery wherever we find it.'

"Observe, if you please, the entire plausibility, the devilish ingenuity, of the Baron's position. Pluvinskow wet his lips and swallowed two or three times before he spoke.

"'Er—Baron, suppose General Lipowski is inclined to doubt my statement that the letter is not genuine? This signature is amazingly good! Don't you see where that puts me with the secret police? If he takes the view that it is really mine, it means ruin for me—possibly a firing-squad!'

"The banker was apparently sympathetic—undecided as to his proper course. 'H-m-m—you—er—think it might be difficult to prove it a forgery?'

"'How *can* I prove it? I've nothing but my personal word! It's not, unfortunately, anything which might be cleared by an alibi! A man writes notes at any time, in any place. Or he *doesn't!* How is one to prove it, either way? You have in your hand a very clever and compromising duplicate of my writing and signature. Either I wrote that note—or I didn't! But will Lipowski and his police give me the benefit of the doubt? Why should they? And if they don't? There's little question as to what happens to me!'

"'Well—but what the devil am I to do in the matter? If you think Lipowski will doubt your innocence, what reason can you give *me* for believing it? If you did write the letter, there's no question whatever as to my duty! Even though you were an intimate friend of long standing—which you're not—I would hardly dare suppress it.

Either you're too dangerous a man to leave unexposed or you're merely an unfortunate victim of circumstances. But if you can give me nothing in the way of proof, isn't it rather childish of me to believe you?'

"The Councillor began to have a dim comprehension of the trap he was in, though he didn't as yet suspect Stellanovski of deliberate forgery; and he displayed an amount of nerve that we were forced to admire.

"'Baron, we seem to be in an *impasse* from which we must extricate ourselves. I cannot permit that letter to reach Lipowski! There must be terms upon which you are willing to destroy it—suppose you make a suggestion?'

"The banker slowly shook his head. 'I wouldn't dare destroy it, sir. These gentlemen have heard the whole discussion. Of course, had I supposed for a moment that you couldn't prove—eh? But I think we all regret the position in which you are placed. If we were personal friends—of the same political beliefs—I should be strongly tempted to lock up this letter in one of my safety vaults and forget it—for the present. But you belong to the Radicals—you are assisting Trepoff to put through measures which conservative men, like us bankers, are positive will lead to loss of business confidence—create panic conditions even after the war is over. If you could see those measures as we see them and use your influence to prevent their adoption by the Council, I frankly confess that I should feel differently about withholding this letter from the authorities into whose hands it is my duty to place it.' (I saw the perspiration come out on Pluvinskow's forehead, but he appeared to realize what he was up against.)

"'That's the price of your silence, is it, Baron? I am to use my influence against measures of which you disapprove—and you are to keep that letter in a safe place as long as I do so?' (Stellanovski's air of offended dignity would have scored on the stage.)

"'This is not a question of bargaining, sir! My duty in the matter seems quite clear! If I defer carrying it out, it is merely to give you the opportunity of showing by your actions that you're not the sort of man who *could* have written this letter! I think I make my position clear enough! You say it's a forgery—but can't prove it. I would consider your steady opposition to Trepoff in the Council an argument that you are telling the truth. Conversely—the man who did write this letter might easily *support* Trepoff.' (A bit of Italian diplomacy! What? I saw by the Major's face how keenly he appreciated its cleverness.)

"Well, that was just one instance. When Pluvinskow left, the Baron pulled a package of documents from a safe that was built into the wall and concealed by a panel of the wainscoting. He told us they'd be useless in any hands but his—as it was, in each case, a knowledge of the individual's personal affairs which made the papers dangerous. But he mentioned name after name as he ran them over: deputies then sitting in the Duma, men prominent in the Council of the Empire and the old Congress of the Nobility, local politicians and professional men in *zemstvos* as far away as Tomsk and Vladivostok.

"He was like a repulsive black spider, sitting in the centre of his web—struggling even for the breath of life between his asthmatic paroxysms, while every thread of

the web was dotted with flies who rarely knew how they got there or why their struggles to free themselves were unavailing! I fancy very few of his victims even guessed the devilish finesse with which he patiently worked to get them in his power. There's little doubt in my mind that it would have been impossible, while he lived, to make any permanent headway against the German intrigue with which the Russian Government was fairly rotten. I caught a glance from Major Brady's eyes while the Baron was replacing the papers in his safe which told me the man had got to go—but we had neither of us worked out a plan for eliminating him without bringing down destruction upon men who were really valuable to Russia.

"At midnight I had an appointment to play auction at the *Club Anglais* on the Dvortsovaia, which is much frequented by leading politicians and high Government officials—and I hadn't been in the card-room ten minutes before I overheard various discussions of a speech made in the Duma by Prof. Paul Miliukoff, leader of the Constitutional Democrats. It seems he had been pitching into the reactionaries without gloves—stating instances where they had blocked war measures and giving names without much regard to whom he might antagonize. It must have been a good bit more daring than anything ever said on the floor of the Duma before, and what he hinted must have bordered upon what those chaps considered treason against the Romanoff dynasty. Just as I was getting interested, Miliukoff himself came in—a heavy-featured man in a bowler hat—hadn't bothered to dress for the club—too much absorbed in what he was trying to do.

"Miliukoff's friends were endeavoring to keep him from saying too much there—where there were fully as many reactionaries as progressives—and they presently drifted off to a corner of the smoking-room with some young Russians who knew me as the Serbian captain, Gregorio Czechzin. Excusing myself from the card-party for a few minutes, I strolled over and was presently introduced. The Professor gave me a pretty searching look, but appeared to be satisfied as to the side I was really on. He took a chance which I never would have taken in his place—but he was a fanatic on real constitutional government and didn't give a rap whether he risked his life or not. As I shook hands with him, he said:

"'Captain, you people down there in Serbia will set up a republic very soon after this war is over! It's in the air! The day of autocratic government is past! Since the awakening we had as to our inner rottenness after the war with Japan, we have accomplished more in Russia than the world even dreams, and the time is almost ripe to throw off all concealment. Fifteen years ago, men who even talked of what we've actually accomplished in various *zemstvos* would have found themselves in Siberia without knowing how they got there. I've been a political convict in the mines myself! To-day, not even the dreaded Russian police dare arrest us for talking of constitutional government. But this German intrigue is going to strangle us all—undo our work for at least fifty years unless we get rid of it by drastic measures! Gentlemen, those measures will be taken if we have to overturn the entire Russian Government!'

"Of course the chap had forgotten where he was and

who might be within earshot. I glanced about—counting no less than five and twenty men in the smoking-room, many of whom I knew to be of the *Green Circle*. I nudged the Professor by way of warning, and then laughed it off as a joke—told him he'd make his fortune as an actor—as a tragedian. He caught the point—said he supposed he was a visionary living half a century ahead of his time, that every man had his enthusiasms and liked to air them among friends. Then the other chaps carried him off to shoot a little pool.

"For several days after that, Miliukoff kept himself rather in the background of the Duma—probably realizing that his tongue had cancelled whatever life insurance he might be carrying. Then Stellanovski's fine Italian hand began to show itself in the Council. Rasputin had predicted upon the night of his death that the Liberal premier Trepoff—a protégé of Count Witte in the old days—would be forced to resign very shortly and would be succeeded by Prince Golitzine. None of the progressives believed that rumor when they heard it. Trepoff was one of the ablest men in Russia—a fine organizer, already bringing order out of Stuermer's chaos, when it began to appear that he was being hampered and blocked at every step, even by men upon whom he had placed the greatest reliance, Pluvinskow among them.

"I had Leftenant Frobisher obtain an interview with Pluvinskow in the rôle of a Russian officer—and hint that he needn't fear Stellanovski, as the old spider was likely to be squashed at any moment. But that forged letter was too dangerous for the Councillor to risk any chance of its reaching Lipowski; Frobisher couldn't make

any impression on him, and was suspected for his pains. Then Major Brady went to the General with the story—the plan was for Lipowski to have a private interview with the Councillor and tell him he had nothing to fear from the police. But Trepoff resigned the premiership; Prince Golitzine succeeded him—and the only measures discussed in the Council were such as Stellanovski most heartily approved.

"When Pluvinskow and the General did meet neither quite trusted the other; the Baron had done his work so well that the Councillor didn't know where he was at and preferred blindly to follow his master's orders in spite of the police head's assurances, which naturally made Lipowski begin really to suspect him. General Serge Lipowski, it may be noted, though given the entire handling of the Russian police by the Czar, and strongly backed by the Congress of Nobles, is unalterably on the side of the *Entente*, and the bitterest sort of an enemy to Germany.

"The more I saw of Major Brady, the more I admired the perfect ease with which he assumed a character and carried out every detail until it seemed impossible that it could be anything but his normal self. For example: the way he brought about an opportunity for us to go through the Baron's safe. It was far too risky to attempt at night; there were too many *Green Circle* agents among his household. Our best chance was at some time when we were locked in the study with him, discussing our plans. Yet how to render him unconscious, in a natural way that wouldn't arouse his suspicions?

"Brady let it be inferred that he had been a surgeon in the British Army—serving his time in India and then

retiring with brevet rank after coming into a comfortable estate. Next morning, when Stellanovski was almost helpless from asthma, the Major suggested writing out a prescription which had been most efficacious in Bengal, if the Baron cared to have it put up by his own chemist, a perfectly natural and kind suggestion—apparently no chance for him to prescribe anything dangerous without discovery by the chemist—no opportunity for tampering with it. The Baron sent out for the stuff at once, had it fetched into the study, where we were then conferring with him. Tried it. Obtained unquestionable relief—was most grateful to the Major.

"His desk was at the right of a window fitted with double sashes and protected by a steel grille. In a corner of the wall at his right was the panel of wainscoting with the safe behind it. At his left was a broad table upon which he spread out maps, books, and documents for examination. The chairs in which we sat were on the other side of this, with their backs to the well-filled bookshelves which lined that wall clear to the door. During our talk, he had opened the safe to obtain memoranda as to the proposed coöperation with the rising in Ireland—had then pushed the door shut and shoved the panel in place without turning the combination.

"Brady's prescription was taken in half a glass of water—ten drops to the dose. The empty glass, bottle of medicine, and carafe of water stood on the table when he turned his back upon us to open the safe. The Major casually reached an arm across the table, with a small phial concealed in the palm of his hand, and poured a few drops of colorless liquid upon the bottom of the glass. Then he

drew three brimstone matches from his pocket, held them under the table until the fumes were pretty well spread about, and dropped them on the carpet near the Baron's feet.

"He had scarcely pushed the wainscoting back in place before he began to choke from the fumes. Saw the burning matches on the floor and stamped them out—thinking he must have scraped his foot across them as he turned in his swivel-chair. (Observe the cleverness with which Brady had worked out his probable line of thought and action.) In any asthmatic, the fumes of a brimstone match instantly produce almost deadly strangulation. Stellanovski was seized with a paroxysm which made him helpless. He had barely strength enough to pour the glass half full of water from the carafe and drop in the medicine with a clean fountain-pen filler. His trembling fingers let slip more than the ten drops, but he didn't care so long as it relieved him. In two minutes he was breathing easier—but feeling increasingly drowsy.

"Nothing dangerous in an overdose, is there, Major? My hand was shaking so that I got a little too much!"

"No—not from the amount you took. But it'll possibly make you feel heavy and drowsy for a little while. You should have let me measure it out—I didn't realize that you must have inhaled the full strength of those match fumes!"

"The Baron smiled in complete understanding—and settled back in his chair as he began to breathe comfortably again. In two minutes he was unconscious. Even then, there wasn't a move of Brady's that was hurried. He quietly walked around the table—opened that safe—

took out package after package of papers, and glanced over the memoranda indorsed upon the outside of them. Presently he came back and sat down by me with two large bundles which he untied and spread upon the table. My nerves are rather dependable, but I expected every moment that the Baron would regain consciousness or that we'd hear a knock on the door.

"Brady, however, went through those papers as methodically as if he had all day for the job. He even made copies of half a dozen. Five others he took from the package and put in his pocket. They would be missed eventually—but possibly not for several weeks, and we expected a lot to happen in that time. When he had carefully placed everything back in exactly the position he found it, the Major closed the safe door, turned the combination, and shoved back the wainscoting. It was most unlikely that the Baron would remember he hadn't locked it himself. In another five minutes Brady had restored him to consciousness in a chair by the open window—on our side of the long table. Stellanovski had no idea that he'd lost himself for more than two or three minutes, and was breathing so much more comfortably than he had in several days that he was very grateful.

"Had he discovered the loss of those papers within the hour, I don't think he would have suspected us for a moment.

"Neither Brady nor I relished the job of killing the man. It's a rotten thing to do when you're guests in a chap's house, no matter how badly he needs killing. But every day the Baron lived meant the possible loss of several thousand lives to the *Entente*.

"He was at that moment the chief driving force behind that cursed *Green Circle*, with more than six thousand regular and associate members in every part of Russia, in the Russian Embassies of every Allied Nation. While he lived, terrorizing influential members of Council and Duma, it was impossible to get any real concerted action by Russian armies in the field for more than a few weeks at a time. Progressive Ministers found themselves mysteriously blocked from the first days of their administration. The man had to be eliminated. If we funked the job ourselves, we had to find some other way—that was all there was to the proposition. And that's why the Major went through those papers in the safe; he wished to find a document that would start something.

"Of course we couldn't examine closely those we had taken in the Baron's house—quite too risky. We motored down to the British Embassy and locked ourselves in an upper room. Presently we came across two notes on crested, scented paper in a woman's handwriting—commencing 'My dear Alexis'—asking for immediate loans of fifteen and twenty thousand roubles—referring to previous loans—signed with initials. On the back of the outside one the banker had pencilled by way of reference the name 'Wirdanoff.' Brady decided, after a few minutes' consideration, that it must refer to the beautiful young wife of Stanislas Wirdanoff, a deputy from Odessa. He was known to be completely infatuated with her; it had been rumored even that he deferred to her judgment in political matters. This told us exactly how the Baron's influence had been used—except that we believed both letters to be forgeries used to coerce her. The girl had had

the appearance of being on the verge of a nervous breakdown for a month.

"Just as we were considering how we might use these letters, the news of Miliukoff's attack upon the ministry, in the Duma, went roaring through the city. Stellanovski told us after dinner, that night, of the arrangements he'd made to have the Professor killed before morning; we had to invent pressing engagements in order to get out of his house in time to catch Miliukoff in his own quarters and hustle him off in a limousine to the British Embassy. Later, disguised as a footman on the front seat of the Embassy landaulet, we ran him over the ice past Kronstadt and put him abroad *E-69*.

"We urged him to run across the Baltic for a while and lie doggo in Stockholm—but he refused. Said that, unless he could somehow keep in touch with the *Zemstvo* organization, all their work of the previous two years might be wiped out by the *Green Circle* and *Camarilla.*

Next evening, by special invitation, Brady and I dined with the Princess Xenia and McMurtagh at the Tarazine Palace. I had known that most of her associates among the nobility were reactionaries, and the Honorable Aloysius had told us that she was a member of the *Green Circle;* so we were quite bowled over when she took us up to the library of her private suite with him and Michael Rodzianko, the President of the Duma—informing us that she had gone over to the progressives. Neither Brady nor I would have given her a week to live after her defiant cutting loose from the *Green Circle;* they certainly wouldn't lose her personal influence and great wealth tamely, not to mention the things she was in position to

disclose. But McMurtagh told us she had placed a written statement and list of names with her executors to be made public immediately upon report of her death or disappearance—and they didn't dare lay a finger on her.

"We didn't entirely trust her or Rodzianko until they began commending Miliukoff's speech in the Duma and planning a safe refuge for him where he could still keep in touch with the progressive leaders. None but ourselves knew where the man had disappeared to after he left the British Embassy. The Princess feared he had been captured by Stellanovski's murderers—until we told her he was in a safe place. McMurtagh asked if the Professor would be safe in her palace—which is a miniature replica of *Hampton Court*, and contains suites where a person might live for months without being seen by others in the building. She said that her servants were devoted to her—would answer for the concealment and safety of any one in the palace. We were commissioned to submit the proposition and see what the Professor thought of it.

"He didn't hesitate an instant—said he'd known for some time that the Princess Xenia Tarazine was really more democratic than many of the *zemstvo* leaders. We brought him to the palace next evening and he stayed there nearly a month. Then we had a conference in that secluded library which made me jolly well fancy I must be out of my head.

"You know, while Germany is considered almost the limit in the way of military autocracy, Russia has been, for centuries, the most absolute despotism in the world. To suggest for one moment the near possibility of a real

democracy in the Russian Empire would have gotten a man laughed out of any Chancellery in Europe. Yet the Princess—who traces her ancestry back to Ghenghis Khan—the President of the Duma, and Professor Miliukoff began seriously to discuss just that possibility. Instinctively I got out of my chair to examine the doors and windows—for, if what they were saying happened to be overheard either by one of the *Green Circle* or any officer of the Court, I wouldn't have given much for our chance of living twelve hours. Mind you, we'd been having two or three assassinations of prominent men every day or so, for months; aye, and women, too—countesses, Court beauties, wives and daughters of well-known men.

"I gathered from a study of Xenia's face, as she talked, that she was secretly quite infatuated with McMurtagh—he was a handsome chap, with a most charming personality—and that he'd been largely responsible for her coming over to the progressive side. It seems he and young Prince Kussupoff were of the party which abducted Rasputin the night after he insulted the Princess in her own palace, and were present when the mysterious woman shot him. That caught her fancy. However—getting back to their discussion—Miliukoff began giving details of the progressive organization which amazed me. I knew Russia had been greatly humiliated by the drubbing she got in the Japanese war, but had supposed the feeling confined almost entirely to the aristocracy—didn't think the people had enough interest in the Government to bother their heads about such a question. I knew, of course, that the whole country had been working together in the effort to defeat Germany. But Miliukoff's talk

left me stunned. I couldn't help firing a sarcastic question at him.

"'One infers, Professor, that you think you can visualize enough power, eventually, to make Nicholas abdicate? Eh?' (It was the most utter nonsense, of course!) Imagine my feelings when he calmly replied—after lighting a fresh cigarette:

"'Were it not for some underhand influence in both Council and Duma, Captain—influence which has baffled us so far, and which we're unable to ferret out—I would place the Czar's abdication not later than the first day of April—All Fools' Day.'

"'Surely, Man, you can't be in earnest! Consider where you are—the sort of country you're in! Consider what has been happening every day to men who have held opinions not a hundredth part as treasonable as yours!' (Xenia was looking at the man in wide-eyed amazement—but with quite evident admiration at the very audacity of his dreaming.)

"'Russia has changed almost unbelievably since this war began, Captain; it has shaken our social structure to its very foundations. Germany started the war solely from the determination of the kaiser and his military aristocracy to conquer the world and bring it under German rule. Russia has fought from a determination of the common people to make that sort of thing hereafter impossible. Do you think that for a hundred years or more some of the best educated people in a vast country like this can be exiled to lives of torment in the Siberian mines for no greater offence than free-thinking without having a leaven of determination working constantly

through the mass to its bottom layers! The Nihilists gave the first indication of this determination to change such conditions—and were shot for their crimes, as they deserved to be. Individual assassination amounted merely to murder—it was opposing a child's pop-gun to a forty-two centimetre cannon. The Russian people revere the Czar, as a man—though few of them consider him divine. We have no wish to injure him, but he is showing himself incapable of governing us; he sometimes listens to German intrigue when he ought to shoot the man or woman who whispers it. He makes strong, patriotic decisions—but lacks the punch to put them in practice regardless of opposition. So—after a little while—we shall ask him to retire to private life and permit some abler man to run the nation.'

"Really, you know, I had to pinch myself! *That* sort of talk in Russia! But there was a sanity about it so very different from the Nihilist rot one always hears in Petrograd and Moscow that it gripped me—just as it did Her Highness and Rodzianko. I could see that she was mulling it over in her mind; presently she began asking questions—slowly, carefully, considering exactly what she wanted to get at before she spoke.

"'You say, Professor, that you're blocked just now by some influence in the Government which you can neither combat nor trace? Have you no idea of the people who might be responsible for it?'

"'Well, presumably the *Green Circle*, Your Highness—but one hears there are six thousand or more members, and has no idea whether they are one's immediate confrères upon the floor of the Duma or the acquaintances with

whom one lunches at the restaurants. Some of the aristocracy are members—some are not. Whom is one to suspect? Of all who may be in such an organization, who are the real leaders behind it? If we were sure of their identity, where are we to get sufficient proof to curtail their activities in the Government? I assure you it is like an invisible wall of granite against which we bump our heads and bruise our brains without making progress! I believe one half the well-meaning deputies in the Duma, and at least one third of the Councillors, are being terrorized by an influence which they dare not defy! Give me some lever by which I can pry that fear off their minds, and I believe I could get together a revolutionary majority in forty-eight hours!

"'I can name to you three leaders of the *Green Circle* who have recently been eliminated very opportunely. If they had lived, Russia would have experienced another overwhelming catastrophe within the last week. They were Rasputin, Count Boris Gazonoff, and General Ivan Ossipovitch, who was on the point of sending thirty munition trains wandering all over Siberia instead of to their destination on the western front.'

"Here the Major quietly came into the discussion with a remark so full of unbelievable possibilities that I found myself gasping at what it opened up:

"'And I, Professor, can give you the name of the Chief who plays with the *Green Circle* like a set of chessmen—the gross black spider who wheezes in the centre of the web and catches political flies upon every thread of it. Baron Alexis Stellanovski is the man. In a safe, at his mansion on the Aptekarsky, are files of blackmailing docu-

ments which enable him to control your fellow-deputies and the Councillors. The Captain and I have examined nearly all of them; some are now in our possession. I think it will be possible, inside of a week, to hand over each of those documents to the individual it has been threatening for months, or years—because—do you know—I fancy that Stellanovski is a dying man. Say Friday night—not later than Saturday morning, anyhow—I think his undertaker should be notified. Unless I'm very much mistaken, a certain outraged husband will call upon him a few hours before that time.'

"There was a dead silence for a moment. Then Miliukoff drew a long sigh and lighted a fresh cigarette.

"'Major,' he said, 'if you can deliver those documents, as you say, and if they have the effect which you imply, I salute you as the man who makes imperial autocratic Russia—a democracy! It needs merely—only—what you say you can do.'

"Of course it was fine—gave one thrills and all that; but one couldn't escape the feeling that it was bally rot, just the same. Overturning an absolute monarchy with a hundred and eighty million subjects who've not even had a constitution for more than twelve years isn't as simple as all that!

"To my amazement, however, neither McMurtagh nor Major Brady seemed to fancy the thing impossible. They began planning things for the next few days as methodically as if they had a fighting chance of pulling them off. And the Princess Xenia, mind you, was as crazy with enthusiasm as Miliukoff himself—said that autocratic government in this Twentieth Century was as much out

of date as slavery, to which it was closely related. This from a Russian aristocrat, if you please!

"When Brady and I left the Palace Tarazine, I felt as if I were merely one of the procession—things were moving a bit too fast for me.

"Next morning, we called upon the deputy Stanislas Wirdanoff, at the hotel where he maintained a suite. He was a fine, upstanding chap with snapping black eyes and a lot of go to him—you'd say he'd be as jealous as Othello where any woman belonging to him was concerned. Brady got at his errand in so quiet and courteous a way that the fellow didn't go off half-shot as men of his temperament are likely to do. He looked at the letters the Major handed him—listened to the statement that we both knew Stellanovski to be a forger and had no doubt he had intimidated Madame Wirdanoff with deliberately forged letters. The point which seemed to occupy his mind to the exclusion of everything else was that the Baron had terrorized—tormented—his passionately loved wife until she was a nervous wreck.

"The devilish wording of the letters showed why she hadn't dared come to him with them. Also he was evidently remembering his votes upon certain measures in the Duma—votes which her supposed wishes had most certainly influenced, and which he now saw had betrayed his country into political chaos at a time when every effort should have been exerted toward a rigorous prosecution of the war. Presently he said that he should have to see the Baron personally—in some public place, if possible. I told him that Stellanovski intended to occupy a box during the Diaghileff Ballet at the *Theatre Marie*,

that night, and he thanked me rather effusively for the information.

"When we left him, Brady hurried me up to the *Club Anglais*—after telephoning General Lipowski to meet us there. Serge Lipowski was too good a diplomat, himself, to go blundering through the club inquiring for us; we happened upon each other quite by accident in the billiard room when it was practically empty. The Major told him that Stanislas Wirdanoff would be at the *Théâtre Marie* that night, and would probably kill one of the *Green Circle* leaders whom he had every right to kill. He suggested that Lipowski's secret police be on hand to arrest Wirdanoff, temporarily, in order to save him from being wiped out by the *Green Circle*—and the General promptly agreed to this.

"Then Brady said that while Baron Stellanovski was away from home that evening he wanted the house raided and everyone in it taken away before he returned—it being understood that not a soul would be in the house when he came back and that there would be no evidence of any disturbance about the place. The impression given Lipowski, of course, was that we'd be waiting for the Baron ourselves, and were planning to do something with him. This would prevent the police from searching the house for papers when the arrests were made and finding that safe. You see, we had our own uses for those papers. In other hands, they might gum things up—and certainly would not be used as we proposed, even though the General was on our side.

"The more I saw of Brady and McMurtagh, the more I admired the precision with which their brains worked.

They were psychologically accurate, every time. Everything came out exactly as we had planned. Stellanovski's house was raided and his people arrested at about ten in the evening. At eleven we got in with keys which Brady had obtained—and sat smoking in the Baron's study for half an hour, apparently waiting for his return. We knew, of course, that Lipowski would conceal one of his men about the place to see what was going on. Presently I got up and stood in the doorway, yawning, while the Major cleaned out that safe and the desk. We had fetched a portmanteau into the house with us, and took it out again—when we had answered the telephone's insistent ringing and heard that Stellanovski had been shot in his *loge* at the theatre. Lipowski's man overheard the conversation, wherever he was concealed—and saw no reason for stopping us. I believe the General thinks we played a sharp trick upon him, though he has never referred to it.

"By the end of the week every one of those documents was in the hands of the man or woman it had threatened—with assurance that they had nothing more to fear from the Baron.

"Then things began to happen. The opposition in the Duma increased until Nicholas prorogued it. But for the first time in Russian history, the people refused obedience to an Imperial ukase. They laughed at it. The Duma and Council passed resolutions abolishing monarchistic government. Nicholas, who had been for a year near the armies on the western front, with the Czarevitch, had no knowledge of what had actually happened until his train was stopped a hundred miles south of Petrograd.

He was like a chip tossed upon the surface of a heaving ocean.

"The rest is current history which may be read in the newspaper files of all libraries. To-day Russia is to all intents a republic—but, from our experience with the many seething undercurrents—the ignorance of the masses and the anarchist opposition to *all* government—I'd wager a good bit that a reign of terror is coming, throughout the country, which will make the French Revolution a comedy by comparison.

"Within the last hour it has been hinted to me that one of our confrères in Petrograd was the famous *Diplomatic Free Lance* himself. I had a suspicion of this more than once—though I can't decide which of the two he could have been—McMurtagh or Brady. They both had an active hand in the revolution—no question as to that. In fact, I'm inclined to think they made it possible for Miliukoff to succeed."

THE END